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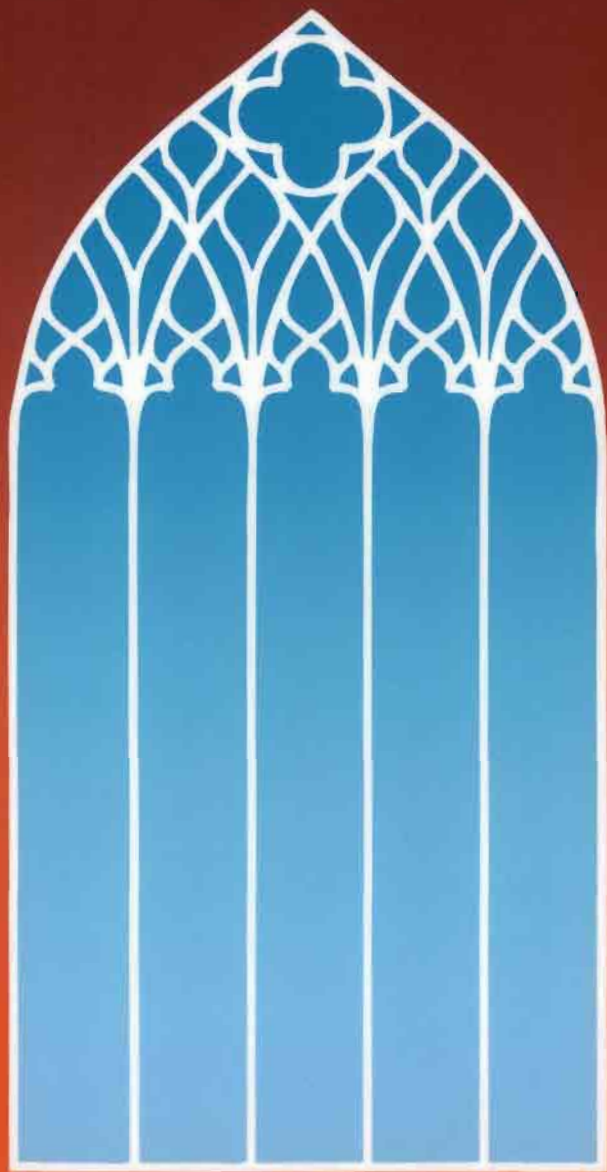
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# JOURNAL OF MORMON HISTORY



FALL 2004

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# “YOU NASTY APOSTATES, CLEAR OUT”: REASONS FOR DISAFFECTION IN THE LATE 1850S

*Polly Aird*

SETTLERS OF THE WEST often did not settle—or not for long. Dissatisfied for one reason or another, they moved on to try somewhere new. The mid-nineteenth century saw mining frenzies in California, at Pike’s Peak, and around the Comstock Lode. They built a railroad across Panama, promoted a transcontinental railroad, and swung aboard stagecoaches in St. Louis for a twenty-day journey to Los Angeles. They hardly needed Horace Greely’s purported admonition to “Go West, young man.” People were on the move—in waves, floods, stampedes, and swarms—but when they got there, they often changed their minds. What was true of the West in general was also true of the Mormon kingdom in its midst. This paper focuses on why some Mormon settlers abandoned their religion and homes in Utah between 1856 and 1859 to move on once more.<sup>1</sup>

The frontier—a concept that itself kept shifting—saw the contin-

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<sup>1</sup>This paper does not include single men lured by gold or silver or families who turned back while on the westward trail. For examples of Mor-

ual movement of families, both within a generation and in succeeding generations.<sup>2</sup> What motivated this ceaseless migration? Usually economic opportunities beckoned. Perhaps the family farm was worn out or too small a parcel to divide among the next generation. Often it was the siren call of cheaper and more fertile land to the west. For some it was family: either as a unit or one small group following another, kinship pulling them along. Sometimes the reasons were individual: to reconfirm one's sense of independence, to claim a new lease on life, to yield to adventure or wanderlust, or to escape malaria or harsh winters.<sup>3</sup>

Continual migration also characterized the Mormons. Before settling in Utah, they had moved successively from Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa, their overriding reason being to escape persecution. Once in Utah, people pushed on locally, seeking a more congenial place or better land or to be near old friends. Hundreds moved at the behest of Brigham Young, heading north and south to establish new colonies and towns, securing the Mormon claim to the land. But they had stronger reasons for confining their wanderings than most Westerners. Most persisted in the Great Basin because of their firm religious belief that this was Zion, the Promised Land they were called to build. They also remained because they shared the ideal of community and were willing to sacrifice individual comfort for the good of the group.<sup>4</sup> The national ideal of family—a husband and wife with bonds of love and affection, companionship and comfort, nurturing

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mon backtrailers, see William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 162, 182–83.

<sup>2</sup>Historian Kathleen Neils Conzen followed the changing homes of two families between 1700 and 1900 as the frontier advanced westward. Her account illustrates the on-going winnowing of settlers wherever they stopped to take root for a while. Kathleen Neils Conzen, "A Saga of Families," *The Oxford History of the American West*, edited by Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 315–57.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 319, 325, 353; Ray Allen Billington, *America's Frontier Heritage* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 186–88; John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 17–18.

<sup>4</sup>Dean L. May, *Three Frontiers: Family, Land, and Society in the American*

their children and seeking better futures for them—was not the ideal set in Utah in this period when church leaders were promoting plural marriage.<sup>5</sup> The Mormon eye was instead turned to the kingdoms they would inherit in eternity.

Some Mormons, however, abandoned their religion and left Utah altogether within months or a few years of settling there. Some returned east, seeking the more fertile lands they had passed through on their way west. Some went to California with its riches in gold, soil, and climate. Sometimes they left because of the hardships of pioneer life, individual maladjustment, or homesickness for family and friends. Often it was because they lost their faith, objected to polygamy, or opposed Brigham Young's theocracy.<sup>6</sup>

The period between 1856 and 1859 was particularly turbulent in Utah. Although this is the first detailed study of deserters from the Mormon cause during the late 1850s, it appears reasonable to conjecture that more became disillusioned during these years than those just preceding or just after. A brief chronology of the difficulties will frame this discussion of some who took the road from Zion.<sup>7</sup>

*Summer 1855.* Grasshoppers destroyed nearly every green thing in many areas. Their devastation was followed by a drought, resulting in extensive crop failure.

*Winter 1855–56.* Extreme cold and snow killed about half the

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*West, 1850–1900* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 219–20.

<sup>5</sup>For the national ideal, see Conzen, "A Saga of Families," 326.

<sup>6</sup>P. A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of Their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966), 74–75; Richard L. Jensen, "Brigham Young and the Gathering to Zion," in *Lion of the Lord: Essays on the Life and Service of Brigham Young*, edited by Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 220–21; Mulder, *Homeward to Zion*, 182–84.

<sup>7</sup>For an overview of the times, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (1958; reprinted, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 148–97; David L. Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1998), 103–201. For the natural disasters in the first part of this period, see D. Robert Carter, "Fish and the Famine of 1855–56," *Journal of Mormon History* 27 (Fall 2001): 92–124.

livestock in the territory.

*Spring and Early Summer 1856.* Hunger was widespread because of the previous summer's crop loss; people begged in the streets and dug wild roots.

*Summer 1856.* Drought, grasshoppers, cutworms, and tobacco worms resulted in significant crop loss for a second year.

*Late Fall 1856.* The Martin and Willie Handcart Companies, the last two of the season, arrived. They had started too late from the Missouri River and experienced early winter storms. All suffered and many died.

*Winter 1856–57.* Utah experienced another harsh winter with snow eight feet deep in some places.

*Fall 1856 to Summer 1857.* Although the Mormon Reformation may have had some positive effects in improving morals and increasing unity, Brigham Young and other Church leaders used harsh rhetoric and expounded some extreme doctrines to "purify" the people. Individuals were questioned about their behavior and often made public confessions of wrong-doing. Rebaptism became the norm. Entering or expanding the practice of polygamy was considered a sign of zeal.

*March 1857.* A father and two sons who had become disaffected from Mormonism tried to leave for California, but the father and one son, plus one of their betrayers, were killed in a bloody episode known as the Parrish-Potter murders. (See pp. 172–201.)

*May 1857.* Parley P. Pratt, a popular apostle, was killed by the angry husband of one of Pratt's plural wives.

*July 1857.* The U.S. Army was advancing on Utah to put down the "Mormon rebellion," news that Brigham Young announced with maximum effect on Pioneer Day.

*September 1857.* Some 120 emigrants from Arkansas were murdered at Mountain Meadows in southwest Utah by Mormons with the help of Native Americans. That same month, Brigham Young declared martial law in the territory and called missionaries in foreign countries and members in outlying settlements back to Utah.

*March-June 1858.* Young ordered all those living in Salt Lake City or the northern settlements to vacate the city and move south in anticipation of the army's arrival.

*June 1858.* Some 2,500 soldiers of the U.S. Army marched through Salt Lake City and established Camp Floyd in Cedar Valley,

about forty miles to the southwest.

Given this turmoil, it is hardly surprising that some Mormons, perhaps many, decided to seek a better life elsewhere.

### THE EXODUS OF 1856-59

More than any other people who come to mind, religious or secular, Mormons chronicle their lives and keep statistics. Yet if a member should become disillusioned and leave, he or she disappears from such documents except for an occasional "Gone to California" noted on a ward record. Anyone researching those who left in the late 1850s has an additional problem, for few wards kept records during the move south and for several months afterwards. Unless those who left published their experiences or wrote memoirs for their families, they are lost to sight. Thus, determining the numbers of those who left is fraught with difficulty.

How many left in the late 1850s? Excommunication records might give the best idea, but they are not open to researchers. Samuel Pitchforth of Nephi noted in his diary that, at a special conference of Church authorities on November 13-14, 1858, in Salt Lake City "upwards of two hundred were cut off."<sup>8</sup> Lacking official Church figures, however, it is still possible to get anecdotal glimpses of the size of the exodus from a variety of sources.

In April 1858, Alfred Cumming, the civilian governor escorted by the U.S. Army to replace Brigham Young and thus separate church and state, offered protection for any wanting to leave. He wrote to Secretary of State Lewis Cass that 160 took up his offer, but the list of those who applied to him adds up to 194.<sup>9</sup> Captain Jesse A. Gove, camping with the army near Fort Bridger, listed 214 names given to him by non-Mormon Thomas Coverdale, a member of the departing

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<sup>8</sup>Samuel Pitchforth, November 14, 1858, Diary, typescript, Archives of the Family and Church History, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives).

<sup>9</sup>Alfred Cumming, Letter to Lewis Cass, May 2, 1858, Letterpress Books, Alfred Cumming Papers, typescript, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; "Names of some of the persons who left this City in May 1858," Correspondence 1857-April 1858, Cumming Papers. Elias Smith commenting on those who applied to Cumming wrote, "Several disaffected persons went to the Pretender (Cumming) during the day to lay their grievances before him. Surely they



group.<sup>10</sup> Yet Frederick Gardiner, another member of the departing company, gave the number as 236.<sup>11</sup> Since some likely joined the company at the last minute without formally applying to Cumming, I believe that somewhere near the Coverdale or Gardiner number is the most accurate.

Cumming, responding to Cass's request to report the net changes in population, wrote in February 1860, "I have no data whereby I can form an estimate of the number of persons who annually arrive in and depart from this Territory."<sup>12</sup> Newspapers in 1859 across the country equally lacked data but had less hesitation to supply figures. The *Weekly California Express* in Marysville, California announced: "Many dissatisfied persons are leaving the country, and it is estimated that Brigham has lost not less than five thousand followers," and, "A general stampede seems to have seized the sojourners, and they are leaving the Territory in all directions."<sup>13</sup>

A history of Nevada describes how Mormons left the Washoe

have lost their senses or they would not seek protection from such an impotent source." If some wishing to go agreed with Smith's view, they may have sought other ways to leave. Elias Smith, April 26, 1858, Journal, typescript, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

<sup>10</sup>"Statement of Thomas Coverdale, a Gentile Who Passed the Winter Among the Mormons," *The Utah Expedition, 1857–58: Letters of Capt. Jesse A. Gove, 10th Inf., U.S.A., of Concord, N. H., to Mrs. Gove, and special correspondence of the New York Herald*, edited by Otis G. Hammond (Concord: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1928), 291–92.

<sup>11</sup>Frederick Gardiner, *A Mormon Rebel: The Life and Travels of Frederick Gardiner*, edited by Hugh Garner (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1993), 106.

<sup>12</sup>"Official Report of Governor Cumming to General Cass," *Utah Territory: Message of the President of the United States Communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the House, copies of correspondence relative to the conditions of affairs in the Territory of Utah*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, House Exec. Doc. 78 (serial 1056), (Washington, D.C.: Thomas H. Ford, 1860), 45.

<sup>13</sup>"Salt Lake Correspondence," *Weekly (Marysville) California Express*, August 6, 1859, 4, and "An Exodus from Salt Lake," *ibid.*, October 29, 1859, 1. See also "Mormon Exodus," *Valley Tan* (Camp Floyd, Utah), February 22, 1859, 2; "News from Salt Lake," *San Francisco Herald*, March 17, 1859, 2; "About the Mormons," *Daily (St. Louis) Missouri Republican*, July 21, 1859, 2. I have not studied newspaper reports on outmigration from Utah for ear-

Valley, just south of present-day Reno, in 1857 “at the dictation of Brigham Young.” Only a “few months” later, “fully as large a company of apostate Mormons arrived here from Salt Lake, having abandoned the City of the Saints. . . . Many of these settled in Washoe Valley, and thus brought the population up to what it had been the year before.”<sup>14</sup>

Travelers to Utah, both Mormon and non-Mormon, recounted meeting many leaving Utah. For example, Howard Williams of Wisconsin noted that, when his party neared the Sweetwater River in mid-June 1859, they “met quite a number of people from Salt Lake. All Mormons, or were once. . . . They say that they have lived at Salt Lake long enough.” Another emigrant the same summer met some thirty disillusioned Mormons just west of Fort Laramie who had “had a nuff of Mormonism.”<sup>15</sup>

Non-Mormons on the trail might have been inclined to exaggerate defections, but presumably Mormon immigrants would not. Crossing the Platte in the late fall of 1856, James Linforth recorded meeting “a company of emigrants from Utah” numbering “some forty or fifty. The chief fault expressed . . . was ‘no work and no provisions.’” John Pulsipher met fifty wagons of “apostates” toward the end of April 1857 as he entered the valley from Fort Supply for a visit. Thomas McIntyre, an 1859 handcart pioneer, reported encountering some thirty-five wagons of disillusioned Mormons in the last half of July. They were, he said, “finding fault with everything, and everybody. . . . There surely must be a stampede of Apostate Mormons from the valley.”<sup>16</sup>

Mormons in the Salt Lake Valley likewise commented on departures. For three days in a row, April 15–17, 1857, Elias Smith

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lier or later years.

<sup>14</sup>Myron Angel, *History of Nevada with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (1881; reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1973), 624.

<sup>15</sup>Howard D. Williams, Diary, June 13, 1859, typescript, Utah State Historical Society; Arthur Homer Hays, ed., “Diary of Taylor N. Snow, Hoosier Fifty-Niner,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 28 (September 1932): 201 (entry for June 23, 1859).

<sup>16</sup>James Linforth, “Foreign Correspondence,” *Millennial Star* 19 (January 3, 1857): 27–28; John Pulsipher, Diaries, 1838–1891, typescript, Utah State Historical Society, 1:53; Thomas McIntyre, Journal, July 10–August 1,

noted in his diary that “a host of apostates” was leaving; “Apostates leaving the city constantly,” and “Apostates are yet leaving, some of them with Handcarts, and not a few of them are off, before their nearest neighbors know they are thinking of going or that they are tired of Mormonism.” Brigham Young disgustedly wrote to two Church leaders in Great Britain in June 1857: “Our city looks as though it had taken an emetic and vomited forth apostates, officials, and in fact all the filth which was weighing us down.” The next year, Enoch Tripp recorded: “The Apostates are roleing out to the mouth of Emergration Kaneon & Camping,” and in 1859 that, “meny Gentiles & Apostates are geathering themselves togeather preparittory for the States & California.”<sup>17</sup>

#### SEVEN WHO LEFT

I have found seven accounts by disaffected Mormons who report their reasons for leaving Utah during this period.<sup>18</sup> The individuals were all men, and all European—six British and one Swiss. Are they representative of the relative numbers who left in any one year, their nationality, or, more importantly, the reasons for their loss of faith? Is it significant that three of them came on the same ship or that two of them lost their wives on the overland

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1859, holograph, LDS Church Archives. Figuring five to ten individuals to a wagon, Pulsipher’s fifty wagons would mean 250 to 500 departing emigrants, and McIntyre’s thirty-five wagons would account for between 175 and 350.

<sup>17</sup>Elias Smith, Journal, April 15–17, 1857, Utah State Historical Society; B. Young, Letter to O. Pratt and E. T. Benson, June 30, 1857, *Millennial Star* 19 (August 29, 1857): 556; Enoch B. Tripp, May 11, 1858, May 22, 1859, Journal, typescript, 9, 58, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

<sup>18</sup>Perhaps this paper will stimulate a search for others so that the analysis given here can be broadened and refined. I have omitted the account of Mary Ettie Coray Smith who left in 1856 because it is hard to distinguish where truth leaves off and becomes exaggeration or even fiction. Nelson Winch Green, ed., *Fifteen Years Among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith* (New York: H. Dayton, 1858), reprinted as *Mormonism: Its Rise, Progress, and Present Condition, Embracing the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith, of Her Residence and Experience of Fifteen Years with the Mormons* (Hartford: Belknap & Bliss, 1870).

trek? It is impossible to tell. Nevertheless, studying them as a group does reveal patterns. I analyze the reported motivations of six, then reproduce the seventh, a formerly unknown letter by Peter McAuslan, which turned up recently in California where he relocated. I compare his reasons with those of the other six. Together they give an interesting perspective about what prompted a few of the faithful soldiers of Mormonism to turn away. The seven (listed alphabetically) are:

*Charles Derry.* Born in 1826 just north of Birmingham, England, he was converted to Mormonism in 1847. Trained as a blacksmith, he soon gave up his work and spent the next six years preaching the gospel “without purse or scrip.” He sailed in 1854 with his wife, Ann Stokes Derry, and two children on the *John M. Wood* with the help of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund.<sup>19</sup> His wife died on the prairies. In Salt Lake City, he quickly married Eliza Herbert to have someone to care for his young children. They lived initially in Salt Lake City’s Fifteenth Ward and he was employed on the public works.<sup>20</sup> A year later, they moved to Ogden, where Derry worked as a laborer. After the move south during the Utah War, they settled in Bountiful. Although he received a temple recommend, he did not follow through with his endowments because “there were oaths to take that I could not conscientiously subscribe to.”<sup>21</sup> Derry finished his reminiscence in 1902 at age seventy-six; it was first published in 1908.<sup>22</sup>

*Stephen Forsdick.* Born in 1835 in Hertfordshire, England, he joined the LDS Church in 1849 at age fourteen, worked in the counting house of a silk mill, and in 1853 sailed aboard the *International*. He

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<sup>19</sup>Passenger list for the *John M. Wood*, British Mission Emigration Records from the Liverpool Office, LDS Church Archives. The Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF) was a revolving loan program from which an emigrant could borrow to finance the journey to Utah; once there, he was expected to pay off the loan and thus allow others to come.

<sup>20</sup>This is according to his own account, but his name does not appear in public works records at the LDS Church Historical Department. That volume may have been lost.

<sup>21</sup>Charles Derry, *Autobiography of Elder Charles Derry* (Independence: Price Publishing Company, 1997), 35.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, iv, 503.

traveled overland in a £10 company captained by Jacob Gates.<sup>23</sup> In Utah he farmed and eventually settled in Brigham City. He became the clerk for the elders' quorum but was not endowed.<sup>24</sup> He wrote his autobiography more than sixty years later, basing it on his diary, the whereabouts of which is unknown.<sup>25</sup>

*Frederick Gardiner.* Gardiner was born in 1832 near Gloucester, England, converted in 1845 when he was thirteen, ran a canal boat with his father, and sailed to the United States in 1849 on the *James Pennel*. He worked for two years in New Orleans, then crossed the plains in 1851. After some moving around, he settled in Salt Lake City's Second Ward, taught school, clerked in a store, eventually became a self-taught pharmacist, married Sarah Smith, and had two children. He received his endowments in 1855 and was ordained a seventy in 1856. His reminiscence was written after 1880, but was based on his diary.<sup>26</sup>

*John Hyde Jr.* Born in 1833, Hyde was baptized at fifteen in London and ordained a seventy in 1851. From 1851 to 1853 he served under John Taylor on a mission to France. He sailed from Liverpool in 1853 aboard the *Jersey* and traveled overland in the Joseph W. Young company under the £10 emigrating plan.<sup>27</sup> He married his English sweetheart, Lavinia Hawkins, soon after arriving in Salt Lake City and taught school for a living. He received his endowments in February

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<sup>23</sup>The £10/£13 emigrating plan was essentially a half-price program for moving emigrants from Liverpool to Salt Lake City. See Polly Aird, "Bound for Zion: The Ten- and Thirteen-Pound Emigrating Companies, 1853-1854," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 70 (Fall 2002): 300-25.

<sup>24</sup>See Stephen Forsdick, Autobiography, holograph, LDS Church Archives; and Stephen Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail to Zion in 1853: Memoirs of Stephen Forsdick," edited by Fletcher W. Birney Jr., *Brand Book of the Denver Westerners* 9 (1953): 33-55.

<sup>25</sup>Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail," 33 note.

<sup>26</sup>Frederick Gardiner, *A Mormon Rebel: The Life and Travels of Frederick Gardiner*, edited by Hugh Garner (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1993). For mention of the diary see p. xi.

<sup>27</sup>Journal History of the Church of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830-present), September 22, 1853, 1-B, LDS Church Archives.

1854. His account was published the year after he left Utah.<sup>28</sup>

*Frederick Loba.* Loba, born in 1809 near Lausanne, Switzerland, was working as a chemist in manufacturing gas when he was converted in 1853. Later that year, he and his family left for Zion, with Loba paying the passage for his wife, Julie Sider Loba, and six children. They crossed the plains in 1854. His wife died en route from cholera. In Salt Lake City, he settled in the Eleventh Ward, married Harriet Green, and had two more children. He was ordained a high priest and received his endowments. Brigham Young asked him to make gun powder in preparation for the confrontation with the U.S. Army; but becoming unhappy with Young, he never did and left Utah in 1857. His statement was printed in the *New York Times* a year later.<sup>29</sup>

*Peter McAuslan.* Born in 1824 in Stirlingshire, Scotland, McAuslan worked as a pattern drawer for calico textiles in several towns around Glasgow, converted in 1848, and became a traveling elder in Scotland. In 1854 he sailed under the auspices of the £13 company plan on the *John M. Wood* with his wife, Agnes, whom he had married in Liverpool just before departing. He lived in Salt Lake City's Nineteenth Ward until the winter of 1856–57 when he moved to Spanish Fork and farmed. Here he was ordained a seventy.<sup>30</sup> McAuslan was not endowed. He described his reasons for disaffection in a letter (reproduced later in this article) to a friend a year after he left Utah.

*Thomas Poulter.* Poulter was born in 1817 in Surrey, England. He

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<sup>28</sup>See John Hyde Jr., *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York, W. P. Fetridge & Company, 1857); Lynne Watkins Jorgensen, "John Hyde, Jr., Mormon Renegade," *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991): 120–44; and Roger Robin Ekins, ed., "'The Pusillanimous Railings of an Apostate Mormon': The Strange Case of Elder Cannon and Mr. Hyde," *Defending Zion: George Q. Cannon and the California Mormon Newspaper Wars of 1856–1857* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2002), 117–39.

<sup>29</sup>Frederick Loba, "Statement" in "Utah and the Mormons," *New York Times*, May 1, 1858, 4–5. I am indebted to William P. MacKinnon and Will Bagley for drawing my attention to this account. For his birth, see the Record of Members, 1851–55, Lausanne Branch, Swiss-German and French Mission, LDS Church Archives. For residence in Salt Lake City, see the 1856 Utah Census, 334.

<sup>30</sup>Spanish Fork Seventies Quorum minutes, 4, LDS Church Archives.



*Peter McAuslan and Agnes McAuslin McAuslan, Marysville, California, ca. 1867. Photographer unknown.*

became a steward in the Royal Navy and, when on land, a butler. He converted before 1849 and emigrated with his wife, Hannah Butler Poulter, in 1854 on the *John M. Wood* in the same company as McAuslan and Derry, although he paid his own way.<sup>31</sup> Poulter first settled in Bountiful but in 1857 moved to Ogden, supporting himself and his family as a farmer. In his 1884 reminiscence, he relates the events of a life replete with action in rather disjointed sentences but rarely indicates his feelings.<sup>32</sup>

### WHERE THEY WENT

Many disaffected Mormons—Charles Derry and his family were among their number—returned east, some to join the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ).<sup>33</sup> Others went west to California by either the northern route along the Humboldt River or the southern route toward San Bernardino.<sup>34</sup> McAuslan and Poulter both took the northern road. The accounts of the seven and their destinations illustrate a surprising variety.

Stephen Forsdick and John Hyde Jr. both left in 1856 before the Reformation. Forsdick, a single man, left with a couple and their young daughter, because they had a yoke of oxen and a wagon. The group was so impoverished they could not get together enough food to last for even half the journey. Part of the way to Fort Laramie, Forsdick and his companions traveled with the James Davenport train, another group of former Mormons seeking better economic conditions in the East. Forsdick worked for the sutler at Fort Laramie

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<sup>31</sup>Passenger list, *John M. Wood*.

<sup>32</sup>Thomas Ambrose Poulter, "Life of Thomas Ambrose Poulter from His Diary," *Utah Pioneer Biographies*, 44 vols. (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1964), 44:94-165.

<sup>33</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 57-62. Although no study of Utah Mormons who later joined the Reorganized Church has been made, the raw data can be found in Susan Easton Black, *Early Members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 6 vols. (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993). See also Lewis M. Weigand, "Separate Trails," 7-9, paper presented at the Mormon History Association conference, May 23, 1997, Omaha, Nebraska, photocopy of typescript in my possession.

<sup>34</sup>For the latter, see Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino: The Rise and Fall of a California Community* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 355-60, 414.



for six months, married, and then continued on to Kansas with several officers in November 1856.<sup>35</sup>

John Hyde Jr. struggled with his decision to leave Mormonism. "Every tie that could bind any one to any system, united me to Mormonism," he wrote. "It had been the religion that my youth had loved and preached; it was the faith of my parents; of my wife and her relatives. . . . I clung [to it] with desperate energy" as his belief waned after reaching Salt Lake City. In May 1856, he accepted a mission to Hawaii because he hoped "that to be actively employed in the ministry might waken up my old confidence; that in the effort to convince others, I might succeed in reconvincing myself."<sup>36</sup> However, he reached Hawaii convinced that Mormonism was incorrect, returned to San Francisco where he had earlier defended polygamy, and preached against the practice, then went on to New York City where he published an anti-Mormon book. His wife remained in Salt Lake City.

Frederick Loba tells a harrowing tale of escape in April 1857. He greatly feared the Danites<sup>37</sup> because he had been so outspoken about his belief that Mormonism was not inspired by God, had made negative comments about some Church leaders, and had refused to take plural wives. These actions, he claimed, "determined the Prophet to order my private execution." He had eight children, a wife, a brother-in-law, and a mother-in-law. Feeling that he was at the greatest risk and not wanting to expose the rest of his family, he and his wife fled by night, leaving the road and going cross-country over the

<sup>35</sup>Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail to Zion," 49–54.

<sup>36</sup>Hyde, *Mormonism*, 21–22.

<sup>37</sup>The Danites or "Destroying Angels" began as a Mormon vigilante group organized in 1838 in Missouri and were bound by secret oaths to exact vengeance on the enemies of Mormonism. Many believed they continued their mission in Utah. Klaus Hansen in commenting on the organizer of the Danites wrote, "Ostensibly, Avarad had organized the band in self-defense against the depredations of the Missourians. But his real intentions went farther, and must be identified with Smith's ambitions to establish the political kingdom of God. Although the prophet repudiated Avarad's excessive zeal and excommunicated him from the church, there can be no question that the germ for Avarad's ideas must be sought in ideas that originated with the leader of Mormonism himself." Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1970), 57–58.

mountains so as to avoid detection.

Loba and his wife reached the comparative safety of the Shoshone Indians on the Green River. From there they were helped to Fort Laramie by Postmaster H. F. Morrell and Surveyor General David H. Burr who heard of their plight and were fleeing themselves.<sup>38</sup> Loba's brother-in-law later told him that Young had sent twenty-two horsemen out in every direction trying to intercept him. His brother-in-law followed a week later with Loba's mother-in-law and Loba's eight children. They were allowed to leave, but Church agents took everything of value from them and they reached Fort Laramie "in a state of perfect destitution." The commanding officer at Fort Laramie, Colonel William Hoffman, gave the family enough provisions to reach Kansas Territory.<sup>39</sup>

Charles Derry, like Hyde, only reluctantly gave up Mormonism and left Utah in 1859: "The principles of the gospel which I had obeyed were true," he testified. "They were in perfect harmony with the Scriptures; in fact, they were the pure Word of God. . . . It was the blessed result of that truth on my heart and mind . . . that caused me to hesitate when I thought of turning away and seeking rest for my wearied soul elsewhere." His wagon and cattle were taken from him to pay his Perpetual Emigrating Fund debt and also, he felt, to prevent him from leaving. Brigham Young gave him a certificate saying he had made settlement. With the help of a loan, he was able to buy a yoke of oxen, which he hitched to the wagon of another departing Englishman, William Moore. The group, consisting of eleven families in ten wagons, "were permitted to leave the Territory without molestation." Derry, his wife, and two children went in Nebraska where his mother, brother, sister-in-law, and cousin were living.<sup>40</sup>

The year 1859 also saw the departure of Frederick Gardiner, Peter McAuslan, and Thomas Poulter. Brigham Young had assigned

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<sup>38</sup>For an account of the flight of government officials, see Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 135–36.

<sup>39</sup>Loba, "Statement," 4. Jean Frederick Loba, "Reminiscences," 1899, typescript, 16–17, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, age eleven at the time of the family's flight, described the pillaging of the family's goods, which left them "in an impoverished and crippled condition, with weeks of travel before us, a large family of children, and utterly inadequate provisions."

<sup>40</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 27–28, 49–54.



*Charles Derry, taken during the Civil War. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Community of Christ Archives, Independence.*

Gardiner to tend the tollgate at the mouth of City Creek Canyon; but when he discovered that his wage of seventy-five cents a day was not enough to live on, he resigned, telling Young he could make more teaching school. Gardiner finally decided to leave Utah to study medicine. In April 1858 when Governor Alfred Cumming offered to protect those who wished to leave, Gardiner, his wife, and two young children joined the company. Camped at the edge of the city and ready to leave, he was called back twice to Brigham Young's

office. The first time Young unsuccessfully tried to dissuade him from going, then told him he had apostatized by leaving the toll-gate. At the second interview, Young told Gardiner that he was responsible for his father's unspecified debt to the Church, although his father insisted that "if he was in debt, he preferred to pay it himself."<sup>41</sup> Young, nonetheless, forced Gardiner to give up his house and lot to pay for it.

In May Gardiner stopped at the army camp near Fort Bridger and set up a barber shop, intending to continue his journey in the fall. Most of the army left the camp in June to march through Salt Lake City, but Gardiner stayed on, working in the quartermaster's office. When he was ready to recommence his journey east in October, the assistant quartermaster persuaded him not to leave so late in the season with young children. Gardiner and his family therefore returned to Salt Lake City for the winter, living next door to his wife's mother. But shortly after his arrival, neighbors first threatened, then beat him. Under military escort, he traveled to Camp Floyd where he worked as a doctor. In June 1859, Gardiner and his family left Utah with an army escort. He acted as doctor for the fifteen children who had survived the Mountain Meadows Massacre and were being sent back to their families in Arkansas.<sup>42</sup>

Peter McAuslan with his wife, two young children, parents, a brother with a pregnant wife and two children, and two younger unmarried brothers sought the protection of an army escort on the route to California. This escort, which consisted of two companies, one of cavalry and one of infantry, took them approximately to the site of Winnemucca, Nevada. An estimated 160 to 200 emigrants from Utah accompanied the command.<sup>43</sup>

Thomas Poulter, the fourth of the group under study to leave in 1859, had had an offer to go to California with a friend in 1856. When the bishop ordered him to care for a group stricken with smallpox, he

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<sup>41</sup>Gardiner, *A Mormon Rebel*, 93–94, 97, 103–6.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 106–14. Gardiner gives the number of children as fourteen, but Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 236–39, shows that it was seventeen.

<sup>43</sup>Polly Aird, "Escape from Zion: The United States Army Escort of Mormon Apostates, 1859," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 44 (Fall 2001): 196–237.

obeyed and missed the chance. In 1859, again ready to leave, he gave everything to his brother for fear that if he sold his possessions in Bountiful the bishop would hear of it and the "destroying angels" would be after him. He, his wife, and three children joined a non-Mormon group driving 1,600 head of cattle to California; he was employed to handle the provisions wagon.<sup>44</sup>

### BARRIERS TO LEAVING

These seven accounts, reinforced by other sources, report four barriers to leaving that must, in many other cases, have seemed insurmountable to Mormons who might otherwise have decamped: discouragement from Church leaders, poverty, debt, and possibly the obligations of consecration.

#### *Church Leaders*

Much of the preaching of the Church leaders, particularly Brigham Young's sermons, takes the position that the unfaithful could not depart fast enough. As early as March 27, 1853, Brigham Young ordered: "You nasty apostates, clear out."<sup>45</sup> But at the same time, other evidence suggests that Young made strenuous efforts to prevent departures. A few examples will illustrate the conflicting messages.

On August 17, 1856, Brigham Young preached, "It is reported that many are going away; I say, gentlemen and ladies, you who wish to go to California, or to the States, go and welcome; I had rather you would go than stay." But in the same sermon, he also warned: "The moment a person decides to leave this people, he is cut off from every object that is durable for time and eternity. . . . Every possession and object of affection will be taken from those who forsake the truth, and their identity and existence will eventually cease."<sup>46</sup>

Giving a similar message of proclaiming freedom to leave but threatening them in the same breath, Heber C. Kimball had preached just the day before on August 16, 1857, about two weeks after receiving the news that the army was advancing on Utah, "I have not a doubt but there will be hundreds who will leave us and go away

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<sup>44</sup>Poulter, "Life," 149-50.

<sup>45</sup>Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854-86), 1:83.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:31-32.

to our enemies. I wish they would go this fall: it might relieve us from much trouble, for if men turn traitors to God and His servants, their blood will surely be shed, or else they will be damned."<sup>47</sup>

Six months later Young wrote to George Q. Cannon, "It is rather warm for the wicked and we expect when spring comes there will be a scattering out of such as cannot abide righteousness and the purifying influences of the Spirit of God. Let them go, it is better for us to have them leave now in times of peace than to have them fail us in times of trouble."<sup>48</sup>

In June 1858 after Young had accepted Cumming as governor and lifted martial law, he preached, "With the exception of a short time during the late difficulties all persons have always had the privilege of going away from here when they pleased, and have been repeatedly invited to do so if they wished to."<sup>49</sup> In May 1859 just as four of the group included here were leaving, Young preached, "Br. Pratt wishes that the miserable, dissatisfied spirits would leave, but they will not all go. The question might be asked why do you wish them to go from this Territory? We do not particularly care whether they go or stay; they are at perfect liberty to please themselves in that matter."<sup>50</sup>

Charles Derry, one of our seven, wrote that during the Reformation of 1856–57, he attended a meeting in Ogden called by Lorenzo Farr. One member of the "inquisition" told the people "that no man would be permitted to leave the Territory, and if they attempted to leave, they must leave their property and their wives and children behind them."<sup>51</sup> Charles Derry, Stephen Forsdick, and Frederick Gardiner had considerable obstacles put in their way in an apparent effort to keep them from leaving.

Given a record of conflicting statements, it is hardly surprising that those wishing to leave did not believe the Church leaders. They were living under a monolithic theocracy where those in authority continually warned against apostasy in menacing language, held se-

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 4:375.

<sup>48</sup>Printed in *Western Standard*, February 21, 1857, 2, as quoted in Ekins, *Defending Zion*, 234.

<sup>49</sup>Brigham Young, Sermon, June 6, 1858, *Deseret News*, July 28, 1858, 94.

<sup>50</sup>Brigham Young, Sermon, May 22, 1859, *Deseret News*, June 1, 1859, 97.

<sup>51</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 41.

cret meetings, and taught that obedience was a primary duty. Undoubtedly many who lost their faith were afraid, vulnerable to whispered rumors of Danites and danger, and became somewhat paranoid.

### *Poverty*

Poverty appears to have been a major barrier for those who wanted to leave. General Albert Sidney Johnston, commander of the army in Utah, wrote to headquarters: "Many poor persons, heads of families, have at various times applied to me for means of transportation to take themselves out of the territory and away from an association which they say has become distasteful to them; of course I can do nothing of the kind."<sup>52</sup>

John Hyde claimed that poverty prevented him from leaving in 1854 and again in 1855, explaining:

There are large numbers of persons very desirous but quite unable to leave Utah, for lack of the necessary means. . . . They are now a thousand miles from civilization. They need two months' food in advance, when it is more than they can do to provide a week beforehand. They need a wagon to carry that food, when many of them are sleeping in mud-hovels on stick bedsteads. They need a team to haul it. . . . They are poor and helpless, and helpless because they are poor. . . . The Mormons do not use any other physical restraint than by making and keeping them poor.<sup>53</sup>

Hyde concedes that Church leaders did not prevent people from leaving if they were able; however, he left in 1856 before the Reformation, and the situation may have changed over the next three years.

Derry interpreted the Church's tithing policy as a means of keeping the people poor and called it "oppression":

The man that has not sufficient means to provide himself with the absolute necessities of life, much less having a surplus, is tithed one-tenth of his time and one-tenth of what he raises; also one-tenth of

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<sup>52</sup>Brevet Brigadier General Albert Sidney Johnston, commander, Department of Utah, Camp Floyd, Utah Territory, Letter to Lieutenant Colonel Lorenzo Thomas, A.A.G., HQ, U.S. Army, N.Y., March 10, 1859, in Letters Sent, HQ, Dept. of Utah, RG 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>53</sup>Hyde, *Mormonism*, 21–22, 315–16.

what property he has when he arrives there. . . . Now, I ask every candid mind if this is not the heaviest kind of oppression? Nay, is it not robbery to take the bread from the mouths of those half-naked children, and especially when we understand that this is no voluntary contribution?<sup>54</sup>

### *Debt*

People were not allowed to leave Utah without paying their Perpetual Emigrating Fund or other debts.<sup>55</sup> This factor naturally combined with poverty to create a reinforcing condition. Cumming questioned those who applied to him for protection about their debts, including outstanding court judgments, and their plans for payment before departure.<sup>56</sup> Derry mentioned he needed a certificate from Brigham Young saying that his debts were paid before he could leave.<sup>57</sup> What was owed in tithing appears to have been viewed differently, and little evidence has come to light that people were prevented from leaving because they were behind in their tithing.

Some debts, however, appear to have been trumped up or exaggerated. While Derry was a public works laborer, he says he was charged for items at the Tithing Office he never received, including such luxuries as silk and some groceries "which we were utter strangers to." Although he demanded an investigation, the debts were held against him. "Many poor men found themselves in the same condition, but we were powerless to obtain redress." He conjectured that the Church authorities or the clerks in the Tithing Office had taken the items and assigned them to his account.<sup>58</sup> Similarly John Hyde accused: "By some singular system of bookkeeping, although these unfortunate men [public works laborers] are never half paid, they are always found to *be in debt*,

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<sup>54</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 516.

<sup>55</sup>Jensen, "Brigham Young and the Gathering to Zion," 222; Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 102; Derry, *Autobiography*, 47.

<sup>56</sup>"Names of some of the persons who left this City in May 1858," Cumming Papers.

<sup>57</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 49, 51.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.



should they wish to leave.”<sup>59</sup>

Three of the seven mention debts. Forsdick had his hog—which was to have been their food for the journey—taken to pay a “put up” \$20 poll tax. In addition, his Brigham City lot with the irrigation ditch he had dug was taken for an unspecified and “unjust” reason.<sup>60</sup> Gardiner was forced to pay his father’s debt, despite his father’s insistence that the debt was his own and he would pay it himself. The issue loomed large for Derry. He had traveled to Utah with the help of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund.<sup>61</sup> Once in Utah, a succession of tribulations prevented repayment: crop failure, famine, the move south, and the army’s arrival. “With all these hindrances, it had been a hard matter to live at all without paying a debt, which in strict justice I did not owe,” he lamented. “I had spent six years in preaching the gospel without remuneration, and had come to Utah in obedience to the counsel of the authorities. Still it was my intention to pay the debt.” When the bishop learned Derry wished to leave Utah, he confiscated Derry’s oxen and wagon gears to pay his debt.<sup>62</sup>

No doubt some people wishing to leave Utah hoped to escape without paying their debts, as would be true in any society. Our group all appear to have paid what they owed, though not without coercion. It does appear, however, that some debts were exaggerated or that sometimes one was held responsible for the debts of extended family as in Gardiner’s case. Those too poor to pay what they owed, such as most PEF emigrants, had no choice but to remain in Utah.

### Consecration

The “law of consecration” originally revealed to Joseph Smith

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<sup>59</sup>John Hyde Jr., “Salt Lake and Its Rulers,” *Harper’s Weekly* 1 (July 11, 1857): 442; emphasis his.

<sup>60</sup>Forsdick, *Autobiography*, 38.

<sup>61</sup>The *John M. Wood* passenger lists shows Derry and his family as PEF emigrants, although Derry, *Autobiography*, 47, says he borrowed only half their fare. Derry was probably not charged interest on his loan. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1930), 3:410.

<sup>62</sup>The bishop left the family the wagon bed to sleep in. Derry, *Autobiography*, 27.

was the tenet of giving everything back to God because he had given it all in the first place. The intent was to pool resources for the common good and to increase unity. Although the practice was abandoned after the Missouri period, the principle was revived in 1854 and enacted in 1855, after a legal form for the deed of consecration was devised.<sup>63</sup>

Some of Brigham Young's statements implied that its purpose was to stop those wishing to leave Utah. A year after reinstituting the practice, he preached at Parowan, "If the people had done their duty and consecrated all their property to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they could not have gone away and lost their souls. . . . If any man will say, 'I am going to apostatize,' I will advise him to consecrate all he has that he might be kept with the Saints and saved, so that if you are tempted to go away, you may feel it best to stay where your treasure is."<sup>64</sup> On January 20, 1854, the territorial legislature enacted a bill that empowered probate judges to seize property "left by any deceased or abscondent person" and to give it to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund.<sup>65</sup>

Hyde, the only one of the seven known to have promised to consecrate his possessions, believed that the principle's purpose was for control. Brigham Young, he wrote, "frankly stated the object of this policy at the [1854] conference. It was to prevent Gentiles from purchasing any property without ecclesiastical sanction; to hinder departing apostates from taking any property from the Territory; to make it the *interest* of every man to be submissive, and thus to more completely rule the people. Said he, 'Men love riches, and can't leave without means; now, *if you tie up the calf the cow will stay.*'"<sup>66</sup> T. B. H. Stenhouse, who left the Church some years later, wrote concerning consecration that "to leave the Territory was an impossibility: [one] had nothing to

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<sup>63</sup>See Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), chaps. 2, 4. Brigham Young's consecration deed is in Appendix 2.

<sup>64</sup>May 18, 1855, quoted in *ibid.*, 71.

<sup>65</sup>Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 55.

<sup>66</sup>Hyde, *Mormonism*, 38; emphasis his. Hyde's name is on a list of people volunteering to consecrate. See Consecration Deeds, 1854-67, LDS Church Archives. However, no deed with his signature has come to light.

sell. He must remain, or go forth a beggar.”<sup>67</sup>

Did consecration actually prevent people from leaving? Probably not. The deeds were a manifestation of faith for those who signed them. Although the deeds legally conferred title to property to the Church, there is no evidence that Brigham Young or his assignees actually took possession. And even as a test of faith, it must have disappointed Young, since only an estimated 40 percent of families deeded their property to the Church during 1855–56.<sup>68</sup> Paul H. Peterson, a historian of the Reformation period, summarized: “Curiously, Brigham Young never seemed interested in carrying out the program fully. He always insisted it was voluntary, never bothered to give out stewardships, and, after 1855, never pressed the issue. Furthermore, consecration was never a major consideration during the Reformation of 1856–1857, the stress being placed instead on payment of tithes.”<sup>69</sup>

Of the obstacles that prevented people from seeking a new life outside Utah, it appears that poverty and debt had substance. Consecration was probably primarily a psychological deterrent. The Church leaders’ statements that people were free to go were mostly not believed, out of fear.

### REASONS FOR LEAVING

The reasons disaffected Mormons gave fall generally into seven categories: seeking a better life, disillusionment with various aspects of life in Utah, resistance to lack of freedom of thought, dislike of polygamy, loss of confidence in Church leaders, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, and fear. I have grouped what the six individuals said about these topics. Where relevant, I have added corroborating statements from others to help fill in the picture. Peter McAuslan’s annotated letter with an accompanying comparison of his reasons follows this section.

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<sup>67</sup>T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (Salt Lake City: Shepard Book Company, 1904), 502 note.

<sup>68</sup>Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 146.

<sup>69</sup>Paul H. Peterson, “The Mormon Reformation of 1856–1857: The Rhetoric and the Reality,” *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989): 62.

*Seeking a Better Life*

Thomas Poulter and Frederick Gardiner seem to have been primarily motivated to leave by hopes of bettering their economic condition. Poulter, then living in Bountiful and referring to the severe winter of 1855–56, wrote: “Hundreds of the Saints lost all the stock they had. These were trying times for one’s faith. At this time there was lots of game but we had no guns or powder or shot. . . . A friend of mine was going to California and offered me and my wife a free passage. My wife of course was glad of the chance.”<sup>70</sup>

Gardiner wrote, “Of late I have become acquainted with a few who are dissatisfied, and are making preparations to go to the States, as soon as the way is open. I also would like to go in order to learn more in regard to the practice of medicine.” He told Governor Cumming that “I desired to go where I could study medicine, and better my condition.”<sup>71</sup>

Others not in the group also desired to leave for economic reasons. Leonard W. Hardy, counselor to Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter and bishop of Salt Lake’s Twelfth Ward, reported to the bishops’ meeting in May 1859 that many were leaving because they could not make a decent living.<sup>72</sup> A year earlier, Brigham Young had received a letter from three men stating: “We firmly believe in the principles of Mormonism but we wish to go where we can get a better living.”<sup>73</sup> An 1859 observer commented, “I verily believe that the principal portion of those who go away from here do so because they think they can do better, in a pecuniary point of view, among the Gentiles.”<sup>74</sup>

A dispatch dated August 13, 1858, from Fort Laramie, written by one of the soldiers with the army who was also a corre-

<sup>70</sup>Poulter, “Life,” 146.

<sup>71</sup>Gardiner, *A Mormon Rebel*, 103–4.

<sup>72</sup>Minutes of Presiding Bishop’s Meeting with Bishops, 1851–1862, May 12, 1859, as mentioned by Peterson, “The Mormon Reformation of 1856–1857,” 79.

<sup>73</sup>John Everett, John Shipley, and Michael Markland, Letter to Brigham Young, March 16, 1858, Brigham Young Office files, LDS Church Archives. I am grateful to Waldo Perkins, M.D., for pointing this out to me. No reply from Young has survived.

<sup>74</sup>John Jaques, Letter to E. W. Tullidge and Thomas Williams, [1859], as quoted in Stella Jaques Bell, *Life History and Writings of John Jaques*

spondent for the Philadelphia *Daily Evening Bulletin* under the pen name "Utah," described a party of Mormons they had recently passed: "They were returning to the States, and declared that had they known what they would have to endure in Utah, Brigham Young and ten thousand angels could not have induced them to go there. 'But being there,' said they, 'we did the best we could, until the prospect of next winter appalled us.' 'I have left all behind,' said an old man. 'I went there wealthy—I return a beggar. . . .' 'My faith failed to sustain me,' said another. 'Life among the Gentiles is preferable to death among the Saints.'" <sup>75</sup>

Peleg Brown, who later had a ranch in Washoe Valley, Nevada, wrote to his parents on June 21, 1857, from near Fort Hall: "It is not uncommon [to] see 10 or fifteen waggons loaded with movers that have left the Mormans daily that are going to the state[s] I frequently ask the[m] where they are going to and what is the matter[.] [T]hey tell me that they cant live and there is onely one thing that they have enough of and that is wives." <sup>76</sup> James Linforth, en route to Utah, as mentioned earlier, reported that the "chief fault" the party of defecting Mormons had with Utah "was 'no work and no provisions.'" <sup>77</sup> Similarly, the *New York Daily Times* reported that 100 disaffected Mormons who arrived in Lawrence, Kansas Territory, toward the end of July 1857 had "fled from the holy land, partly to escape from the relentless tyranny of the Brigham Young oligarchy, and partly to improve their pecuniary affairs." <sup>78</sup>

But economic hopes were not the only quality of the better life sought outside Utah. Mormon David Candland, who kept the Globe Inn in Salt Lake City would ask those who were leaving for their reasons. "I said to one man, 'What is the matter,' He replied 'I like the gentile manners and customs, and I will go where I shall not have the compunctions of conscience that I should have were I to stay

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(Rexburg, Ida.: Ricks College Press, 1978), 197.

<sup>75</sup>Harold D. Langley, ed., *To Utah with the Dragoons and Glimpses of Life in Arizona and California, 1858-1859* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press: 1974), 45-46.

<sup>76</sup>Brown Family Papers, Nevada Historical Society, Reno, Nevada. I am indebted to Will Bagley for a transcript of the letter.

<sup>77</sup>Linforth, "Foreign Correspondence," 27-28.

<sup>78</sup>"Mormonism—Disgusted 'Saints,'" *New York Daily Times*, August 5, 1857, 2.

here.”<sup>79</sup>

Also part of a “better” life was reunion with kin, and many returned to relatives in the Midwest, where they had a built-in support system. In our group, Charles Derry went to Nebraska where his mother, brother and sister-in-law, and cousin were living. They had been 1856 pioneers, but had dropped out on the journey to Utah.<sup>80</sup>

### *Disillusionment with Utah Conditions*

Disappointment at what they found in Utah was a subject about which all in our group except Frederick Gardiner had something to say. Economic disappointments were no doubt exacerbated by romantic depictions of America as the great land of opportunity. In addition, the European converts had grown up in a world permeated with political idealism, social revolution, utopianism, and millenarianism.<sup>81</sup> Such views naturally reinforced their religious ideals and were encouraged by the American missionaries. They saw themselves leaving the old corrupt world (“Babylon”) and embarking on a quest of biblical dimensions to the new land (“Zion”) of glorious beauty, order, freedom from want, and salvation. Although not phrased in such grand terms, our converts reiterated such dreams in various ways.

Loba, for example, had been assured by the missionaries that Utah “had been appointed by the Lord for the gathering of all those who were honest and pure in heart, . . . that peace and plenty covered the entire Valley, that no evil or wickedness was to be found there, and that the Saints lived there in perfect security, free from want or alarm.” But when he arrived in Salt Lake, “I was grievously disappointed to find that all I had been told in Switzerland of this beautiful land was far from truth.”<sup>82</sup>

In England Derry had been instructed to

gather my family from the wicked nations and go to the valleys of

<sup>79</sup>David Candland, “Discourse by Elder David Candland, Bowery, Sunday morning, May 3, 1857,” *Deseret News*, May 20, 1857, n. paginated.

<sup>80</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 54; see other examples in Weigand, “Separate Trails,” 8.

<sup>81</sup>See for example J. F. C. Harrison, *The Early Victorians, 1832–51* (St. Albans, Herts, England: Panther Books, 1973), 179–203.

<sup>82</sup>Loba, “Statement,” 4.

Utah—there to learn the way of the Lord more perfectly. . . . I was told that there intelligence flowed from the eternal fountains, unalloyed with the base mixture of error . . . ; that there my children would be surrounded with a pure moral atmosphere, and could be brought up in the fear of the Lord. . . . Yet I by no means expected to find every man and woman perfect. But I did expect to see them as a people trying to perfect themselves by an enlightened obedience to the Divine precepts they had received. . . . My every hope was blasted. The peace, love, and pure, genuine righteousness that had been pictured to my mind was not there.<sup>83</sup>

Forsdick confessed: “I was disappointed from the time I landed there. At first I tried to make myself believe that I was not and that every thing was as I had expected to find it, but I know now that it was not. . . . From the time I joined the church, I had thought of Brigham Young as little lower than the angels and of Salt Lake as next door to heaven.”<sup>84</sup>

Expecting to find brotherly love and help in Zion, those without family or old friends to provide support—especially if they were poor—were chilled by the lack of fellowship. After being bereaved of his wife on the trail, Derry felt when he arrived in Salt Lake City “still more lonely than ever. No kindred spirit to comfort me. . . . [A] distant feeling . . . seemed to pervade the very atmosphere. Brethren and sisters seemed more distant than strangers.”<sup>85</sup>

Poulter felt that the American Mormons did not live up to their saintly professions: “I went to the meeting on Sunday. Brother Perry G. Sessions was called upon to preach and he lately had come from his mission in England. . . . He said . . . that the English Saints were like so many cock robins on a cold morning, ready to swallow all they heard preached from the valley. Well I thought this a fine specimen of a Saint.” When Poulter asked a neighbor how to keep the weeds down in his vegetable garden, he was startled to be rebuffed “with a laugh and a sneer, ‘Well, you see Brother you English folk have to learn a

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<sup>83</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 510-11, 517.

<sup>84</sup>Forsdick, *Autobiography*, 27.

<sup>85</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 22.

good deal.”<sup>86</sup>

Hyde found the mixture of the spiritual and secular offensive to his views of religion. In Great Britain, the Church stressed biblical doctrines and discussions. Gifts of the Spirit such as visions had great appeal.<sup>87</sup> Hyde was repelled by typical meetings: “They . . . always commenc[e] by singing and prayer, but discourse on adobe-making, clothes-washing, house-cleaning, ditch-digging, and other kindred subjects. . . . It is no more worship than any thing else they do, as they open their theatrical performances with public prayer, and dismiss the actors, *and some of them very intoxicated too*, with a benediction.”<sup>88</sup>

### *Lack of Freedom of Thought*

Two of our group felt they were pressured to stop thinking for themselves. Charles Derry recorded as a turning point the moment when “a spirit of rebellion . . . seized upon me. I determined to be a free man and do my own thinking.”<sup>89</sup> Stephen Forsdick resisted the Church leaders’ emphasis on obedience: “One sermon [by Heber C. Kimball] which I have always remembered was along the line that ‘We should become like clay in the hands of the potter.’ He said ‘What would we think of a lump of clay if it would undertake to dictate to the potter the kind of a vessel he should make of it?’ He then went on to say that ‘Brother Brigham was the Potter, working under the direction of the Master Potter and if this people would continue to be as clay in his hands, the Lord would continue to bless them.’ . . . I could not and would not be as clay in the hands of anyone.”<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup>Poulter, “Life,” 144.

<sup>87</sup>Ronald W. Walker: *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 78.

<sup>88</sup>Hyde, *Mormonism*, 39–40; emphasis his.

<sup>89</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 34.

<sup>90</sup>Forsdick, *Autobiography*, 32. Many examples of Heber C. Kimball’s preaching on the potter and the clay can be found in the *Journal of Discourses*: for instance, February 25, 1855, September 21, 1856, October 5, 1856, April 19, 1857, August 2, 1857, September 27, 1857.



*Polygamy*

Polygamy was a significant impediment for all except Thomas Poulter, who does not mention it. None of our group had plural wives. Only Frederick Loba reports specific pressures to enter the practice, although Charles Derry felt a generalized pressure and feared that it might become more specific.

Gardiner admitted: "This . . . to my inexperienced and innocent mind, appears very unchristian like, and is a great stumbling block and source of trouble to me."<sup>91</sup>

Hyde took violent objection to misrepresentations about the practice in England and also found it degrading: "In England all its [Mormonism's] objectionable principles were not only ignored, but denied. Its Apostles and Elders . . . not only denied many things that were true, but stated many things that were utterly false. As a sample of their falsehoods, I will instance polygamy."<sup>92</sup> In another piece, he wrote: "The practice of polygamy at Salt Lake does not make men or women happy nor elevated—that on the contrary it does degrade and deprave them,—that it does make wretched women, destroys home, engulfs home pleasures, renders children wicked, rebellious, neglected and precociously vicious; and that to judge it as a cause from the effects that follow it, it cannot come from God."<sup>93</sup>

Forsdick said that his usual answer, on being asked why he abandoned Mormonism, was:

"The practice of Polygamy." . . . The more I saw of it after reaching Salt Lake, the more I disliked. . . . In going to work for [Jacob] Gates, I had a good chance to see how polygamy worked in the home and I

<sup>91</sup>Gardiner, *A Mormon Rebel*, 56.

<sup>92</sup>Hyde, *Mormonism*, 13–14.

<sup>93</sup>John Hyde, "Letter," published in "Renunciation of Mormonism," *The Pacific*, November 27, 1856, reprinted in Ekins, *Defending Zion*, 120. Adding confirmation to part of Hyde's complaint, Brigham Young preached on September 21, 1856, "It is frequently happening that women say they are unhappy. Men will say, 'My wife, though a most excellent woman, has not seen a happy day since I took my second wife'; 'No, not a happy day for a year,' says one; and another has not seen a happy day for five years. It is said that women are tied down and abused: that they are misused and have not the liberty they ought to have; that many of them are wading through a perfect flood of tears." *Journal of Discourses* 4:55.

made up my mind that I did not want any of it in mine. . . . The first Mrs. Gates had been with the Mormons since they were driven out of Missouri and knew all the old Mormons and was particularly intimate with Mrs. Hunter, the first wife of Bishop Hunter. While I was there, the first Mrs. Hunter died quite suddenly and in talking with Mrs. Gates, I said "Wasn't it sad about Sister Hunter's death?" She gave me a look which I shall never forget and said, "Stephen, there are lots harder things to do than to die."<sup>94</sup>

Frederick Loba summarized his observations: "I also saw that the system of polygamy was anything but conducive to peace and happiness in the human family."<sup>95</sup> Charles Derry found the practice repugnant to his moral feelings: "The longer I stayed the more I became painfully aware that I had made a mistake in supposing I could raise my children under righteous influences. . . . It is true they boasted of purity, but the very atmosphere was impregnated with lust. Groups of men could be seen at street corners and public places, with their eyes fixed upon every female that passed." Calling polygamy a "pretended revelation," he described the heavy emphasis "that whoever will not obey it will be damned. This is continually rung in the poor man's ears, and if he does not comply with it, he is denounced and ridiculed by the 'faithful,' and finally given to understand that the time is nigh at hand when all that will not comply with the 'Celestial Law' will be cut off."<sup>96</sup>

#### *Loss of Confidence in Church Leaders*

All in our group expressed great disappointment in the Church hierarchy, especially in Brigham Young. They describe lying, swindling, and the misuse of tithing in particular. As already noted, the lies of Church leaders about polygamy for more than a decade was a major issue for John Hyde: "The whole of the apostles abroad had lied in denying it; positively, deliberately, wilfully lied,—wrote lies,—published and circulated lies,—the heads of the church sanctioned and commanded them and claimed for it the approval of that Being who 'cannot lie'! What confidence can we place in the statements of such men,

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<sup>94</sup>Forsdick, *Autobiography*, 27–28. Forsdick had crossed the plains in the Jacob Gates Company in 1853.

<sup>95</sup>Loba, "Statement," 4.

<sup>96</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 28–29, 514.

or the pretensions of such a system?"<sup>97</sup>

Hyde also wrote about the vastly exaggerated 1856 census, an effort to qualify for statehood: "The district reporters deliberately made affidavit and swore that these census returns were correct; knowing as they did, . . . they were extravagantly and intentionally false! . . . how can they expect to be believed when speaking of the purity of their morals, the divine authority of their revelations, the divine authority of their prophets and apostles, or the holiness of their lives?"<sup>98</sup>

Disillusionment for Loba began in St. Louis on his way to Utah in 1854 when Orson Pratt made him temporary branch president:<sup>99</sup> "My experience . . . with respect to the private character of some of the leading members of the church was not calculated to augment the high opinion which I had formed of these dignitaries. Stealing, cheating and deceiving, and living contrary to the moral principles which I entertained and cherished, were practices which I was obliged to notice every day." Believing that Brigham Young would not sanction such immorality, he set off "full of faith" for Utah. But there, upon exposure to Young and "with many of their secret plans and transactions," he became "fully convinced that nothing which the Mormons said or did was of heavenly origin or inspiration."<sup>100</sup>

Given the grinding poverty of most of the Saints, problems involving money were particularly troubling. Forsdick recorded:

There was one thing that I heard him [Brigham Young] say . . . that helped to sow the seeds of doubt and dissatisfaction in me. . . . In our [crossing the plains] Company a certain Elder borrowed considerable money from a family before leaving England and after they reached Salt Lake, he would not pay them and they complained to Brigham Young about it. The next Sunday in his sermon he brought

<sup>97</sup>John Hyde Jr., "'Utah as It Is,' To the Editor of the Polynesian," *The Pacific*, November 27, 1856, in Ekins, *Defending Zion*, 122; also see Hyde, *Mormonism*, 14–15.

<sup>98</sup>Hyde, "'Utah as It Is,'" 123. Another instance of Young lying, this time about a beef stolen from merchants passing through Salt Lake, is given in Hyde, *Mormonism*, 187.

<sup>99</sup>As Pratt did not arrive in St. Louis until May and Loba most likely left in an overland company in early July (no rosters were kept that year), it must have been a short-term position.

<sup>100</sup>Loba, "Statement," 4.

up the matter and said "That money you loaned to Brother \_\_\_\_ was not your money; it belonged to the Lord and when you let our brother have the money, the Lord just got back his own."<sup>101</sup>

Two in our group claimed that they were swindled. Loba wrote about his crossing the plains, "I had with me two wagons loaded with all kinds of goods, which I had brought over from Europe, to the value of eight or nine thousand dollars. The guides, who were all Mormons from the Valley, plundered me upon every opportunity throughout the journey, especially when we drew near to the Valley. Still I believed Brother Brigham to be an honest man, and in this comforting faith pushed on. . . . After my arrival in the Valley. . . . I . . . became acquainted with many of their secret plans and transactions. These opened my eyes. . . . The conviction had been forced upon my mind that Brigham himself was at the bottom of all . . . wickedness practiced among his followers."<sup>102</sup> Poulter on first reaching Salt Lake Valley also told of being swindled out of animals and his wagon by "sharpers."<sup>103</sup> As already mentioned, Derry was dismayed when items appeared on his public works account that he had not re-

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<sup>101</sup>Forsdick, *Autobiography*, 27. Forsdick may be referring to Young's sermon on December 16, 1855: "There are men who have lately arrived in town who have a draft on me, and who have hunted me up for the cash before they could find time to shave their beards, or wash themselves, saying, 'I have a draft on you at ten days', fifty days', or six months' sight,' as the case may be, with, 'Please pay so and so. Brother Young, cannot you let me have the money immediately, for I do not know how I can live without it.' This is the kind of confidence some men have in me. . . . I am hunted; I am like one that is their prey, ready to be devoured. . . . I will pay you when I can, and not before. Now I hope you will apostatize, if you would rather do it. It is the poor who have got your money, and if you have any complaints to make, make them against the Almighty for having so many poor. I do not owe you anything. You have my name attached to the paper to help the poor; whether they are the Lord's poor, the devil's poor, or poor devils, is not for me now to judge." *Journal of Discourses* 3:3-4. The unedited version of this sermon has not survived. Ronald G. Watt, Letter to Polly Aird, June 18, 2003. Other cases of people who had lent money that was not repaid are cited in Hyde, *Mormonism*, 185, 187.

<sup>102</sup>Loba, "Statement," 4.

<sup>103</sup>Poulter, "Life," 141. Hyde, *Mormonism*, 185-86, also reports several second-hand cases of swindling.

ceived. "Our eyes began to open as to the spirit that actuated our leaders," he wrote.<sup>104</sup>

Except for jobs on the public works, there seems to have been no form of poor relief, leaving the question open of how tithing was disbursed. According to Leonard Arrington, no systematic budgets nor accounting beyond the most general tracked tithing funds.<sup>105</sup> Hyde was one who believed that Church leaders profited as a result, although he cites no specific examples:

The tithing contributed by the people is paid to the employees of the "Public Works"; and, as the authorities are engaged on public duty, . . . they have the first selection, the tithing clerks posting an open account between them and the Lord. Favoritism the most glaring is exhibited in the distribution of the articles. They pretend to pay very large wages to artizans, and salaries to the clerks, but charge equally exorbitantly for articles paid; and while the leading clerks, etc., have an abundance, the poor artizan is half starved, half clad, wretchedly housed, almost insulted on applying for any thing.<sup>106</sup>

Derry had been taught in England that tithing "provided for the poor and needy," but in Utah he found that "Another means of oppression is the perverted law of tithing. . . . I think I am safe in saying that the first widow, the first fatherless child, and the first poor person in any situation, has yet to be supplied from that source—unless it is the widows of the prominent dead among them. One thing I do know, I never saw anyone that really needed it, receive any benefit from it while I was there, which was four years and a half."<sup>107</sup>

Frederick Gardiner was the only one of this group of seven who mentions that the handcart disaster "caused considerable dissatisfaction among the people and caused many to weaken in the faith." Although he was not more specific, he concluded: "Some one is certainly to blame."<sup>108</sup> On November 2, 1856, when the Willie and Martin companies were still struggling to get to the valley, Heber C. Kimball preached a defensive sermon obviously responding to such

<sup>104</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 27.

<sup>105</sup>Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 141–42, 457 note 34.

<sup>106</sup>Hyde, *Mormonism*, 38–39.

<sup>107</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 516–17.

<sup>108</sup>Gardiner, *A Mormon Rebel*, 84.

criticism:

Some find fault with and blame brother Brigham and his Council, because of the sufferings they have heard that our brethren are enduring on the Plains. A few of them have died, and you hear some exclaim, "What an awful thing it is! Why is it that the First Presidency are so unwise in their calculations? but it falls on their shoulders." Well, . . . let me tell you, most emphatically, that if all who were entrusted with the care and management of this year's immigration had done as they were counseled and dictated by the First Presidency of this Church, the sufferings and hardships now endured by the companies on their way here would have been avoided.<sup>109</sup>

### *The Mormon Reformation*

Five of the seven in this study experienced the Reformation of late 1856 to 1857, Hyde and Forsdick having left the summer of 1856. Poulter does not mention it in his reminiscence. Gardiner only briefly refers to the death of Jedediah M. Grant, the apostle who inspired the movement to purify the people: "All the people mourn his loss," wrote Gardiner. "Standing in the front rank, ever on duty in fighting for the cause of truth He has gone to obtain the reward of the just."<sup>110</sup> The remaining three, however, saw the Reformation in a different light and gave it as a prime cause for their disillusionment. Loba referred to it as a dark and gloomy time of suspicion and accusation when "murder was openly advised in the public meetings . . . and persons whose faith in Mormonism was suspected were searched in the hope of finding evidence against them."<sup>111</sup> McAuslan's reactions are clear in the letter which follows later in this paper.

Derry was the most outspoken, devoting several pages in his book to its negative effects: "I know that polygamy, blood atonement, and their oppressing system of tithing, together with the necessity of honoring the 'file leaders' . . . as the Lord's anointed, were the burden

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<sup>109</sup>Heber C. Kimball, November 2, 1856, *Journal of Discourses* 4:64. The Willie company arrived on November 9, the Martin Company on the 30th.

<sup>110</sup>Gardiner, *A Mormon Rebel*, 86.

<sup>111</sup>Loba, "Statement," 4.

of their teaching.”<sup>112</sup> David Candland, as innkeeper of the Globe in Salt Lake City, reported that when he queried departing individuals about their reasons, “Some replied that the reformation had developed more than they ever thought of, and that they felt they could not live ‘Mormonism,’ and finally decided to go away.”<sup>113</sup> John Taylor, accompanying part of the 1857 immigration to Utah, wrote that before they left Florence (now part of Omaha), eighteen wagons of apostates arrived: “They are composed of such as could not endure the late revival and purging among the Saints.”<sup>114</sup>

### *Mountain Meadows Massacre*

Surprisingly, Peter McAuslan is the only one of this group who identified the Mountain Meadows Massacre as a reason for leaving Utah. However, he was also the only one living south of Salt Lake City; perhaps in those days of slow communication, he was more aware of it. He did not mention the massacre in the letter reproduced below; but in a subscription county history of the Sacramento Valley where he settled, the writer who interviewed him wrote, “Upon learning from good authority that the Mormons and not the Indians were responsible for that terrible crime, his faith in the church, which had never been strong enough to cause him to comply with its full rites, was so shaken that he determined to leave Salt Lake City at the first opportunity.”<sup>115</sup>

The “good authority” was most likely U.S. Indian Agent Garland Hurt who was stationed on the Indian farm just outside of Spanish Fork where McAuslan lived. Six days after the massacre when two Utes brought news of it to Hurt, he sent a trusted Ute youth named Pete south by a back way to query the southern Paiutes. Pete reported that the Mormons had persuaded the Indians to attack the emigrants in Mountain Meadows but that, after the Indians were repulsed, the Mormons stepped in and by “lying” and

<sup>112</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 39–42.

<sup>113</sup>Candland, “Discourse”; emphasis his.

<sup>114</sup>John Taylor, Letter to William I. Appelby, “Correspondence from the Plains,” *Millennial Star*, 19 (September 19, 1857): 605–6.

<sup>115</sup>J. M. Guinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sacramento Valley, California* (Chicago: Chappman Publishing Company, 1906), 660. A similar account is given in McAuslan’s obituary, *Sutter County Farmer*, December 25, 1908, 7.

“seductive overtures” induced the emigrants to lay down their weapons. “In the language of the unsophisticated boy, *they cut all of their throats but a few that started to run off, and the Piedes shot them.*”<sup>116</sup>

Perhaps McAuslan told the interviewer he left because of the massacre because it was so well known, would not need to be explained, and would fit into a short biography. Undoubtedly others left as well because of the massacre, but I have found no accounts giving it as a specific reason to date. Most likely these departees’ papers would be in Nevada, Arizona, or California depositories; local histories of defecting Mormons who resettled in these areas, unlike McAuslan’s specificity, often state only generally that the family “abandoned their affiliations” with Mormonism or the person “severed his connection with the Mormon Church.”<sup>117</sup>

### *Fear*

For this group of seven, fear wore vivid colors. All of them expressed fear of some sort. Once they lost their faith and felt estranged from their Mormon brethren, they were afraid to speak their thoughts. Each felt at risk, sometimes to the point of fearing for their

<sup>116</sup>G. Hurt, Letter to J. Forney, October 24, 1857, *The Utah Expedition, Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Reports from the Secretaries of State, of War, of the Interior, and of the Attorney General, relative to the military expedition ordered into the Territory of Utah, Feb. 26, 1858*, 35th Congress, 1st Session, House Exec. Doc. 71 (serial 956), (Washington: James B. Steedman, 1858), 202–5; emphasis his. Hurt mentions McAuslan by name in three letters. Garland Hurt, Letter to General A. S. Johnston, May 1, 1859, Adjutant General’s Office, Army Headquarters, War Department, Letters Sent, Letters Received, 1859–1861, National Archives, copy in the Utah State Historical Society. Hurt reports in these three 1859 letters that McAuslan had come to him to report on “secret maneuvers” of the Mormons. By this time, McAuslan had lost his faith and was supplying information to the army through Hurt. It was when the Mormons thought that the army was about to invade Salt Lake City and capture or kill Brigham Young, and so they were organizing and readying militia units. These letters thus provide evidence of contact between McAuslan and Hurt in 1859. Hurt wrote a similar letter and a shorter one the next day to U. S. Marshall Peter K. Dotson.

<sup>117</sup>John Brown Jr. and James Boyd, *History of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Western Historical Association, 1922), 3:1073, 1267.



lives.

General Albert Sidney Johnston, in transmitting a petition asking for protecting from religious “tyranny [sic]” from Mormon residents of Springville, commented: “The person whose name is first signed . . . says many others would have signed it but were restrained from doing so by fear, and if the names of the signers are made public they will be made special objects of persecution. . . . They assert, a despotic ecclesiastical law has been substituted for the civil, and . . . a portion of the people are now suffering its oppressions.”<sup>118</sup>

All seven specifically mentioned the Danites or others who would do away with them. Leonard J. Arrington, in his prize-winning biography of Brigham Young claims that Young had formed a small group of “Minute Men” whose purpose was to retrieve stolen animals from white or Indian raiders. “So efficient and dedicated were these young men that they began to take on a sinister aspect” and were “sometimes referred to as Danites or Destroying Angels. . . . That the Minute Men were anything more than a group willing to undertake arduous labors for their governor or church president has never been demonstrated.”<sup>119</sup> Historian Paul H. Peterson concludes: “While it is probably true that the Danites never existed in Utah Territory, it seems apparent that locally organized ‘trouble-shooting’ groups policed various locales. It is also probable that Brigham, though not connected with any of them, sanctioned at least some of their doings. In this regard it is instructive that Brigham maintained an amiable association with Bill Hickman, a ruffian of questionable character.”<sup>120</sup>

An exchange of letters in early 1859 in the *Valley Tan*, the first non-Mormon newspaper in Utah Territory, gives a contemporary disagreement over the asserted existence of Danites. The first, signing himself “Truth,” wrote, “A few issues [of the newspaper] since [i.e., ago] reference was made to the existence in this Territory of a Danite band; permit me in all honesty and sincerity to as-

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<sup>118</sup>Johnston, Letter to Thomas, March 10, 1859, in Letters Sent, HQ, Dept. of Utah, National Archives.

<sup>119</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 150, 250.

<sup>120</sup>Paul H. Peterson, *The Mormon Reformation* (1981; reprinted, Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History and BYU Studies, 2002), 72.

sure you such is not the fact. I have been a resident of the Territory many years, and know its workings; but no such an organization as referred to never did, nor does not now exist here. I know it is a common rumor, and many, doubtlessly, honestly believe it; but it is a common error."<sup>121</sup>

"E. X. Y." responded the next week:

That a secret band, or junto, once existed among the Mormons, by that name, can scarcely be denied. But Truth denies its existence now. This may be; they may have changed their name, for the purpose of executing more successfully the duties enjoined upon them. It may not be out of the course of Mormon policy to deny the existence of facts occasionally. We well remember, when it was first reported that polygamy was, or would be incorporated, into the Mormon creed, it was most positively denied by their Apostles and Elders. . . . Subsequent developments have exposed venality, and cast doubt upon the credulity of any statement they may make in regard to their institutions. . . . Then what right has your correspondent to expect our confidence, though he comes to us clothed with the veritable signature of *Truth*?<sup>122</sup>

Given what Michael Quinn calls the "culture of violence" that existed in Utah, whether the group existed formally may be something of a moot point. "LDS leaders publicly and privately encouraged Mormons to consider it their religious right to kill antagonist outsiders, common criminals, LDS apostates, and even faithful Mormons who committed sins 'worthy of death,'" he explains, adding, however: "Mormon theocracy created such a unique context for Utah violence that it will always be impossible to determine how many violent deaths occurred for theocratic reasons and how many merely reflected the American West's pattern of violence."<sup>123</sup>

Whether the Danites existed in fact or only in rumor, all seven of our group believed in the real possibility of ecclesiastically sanctioned murder. For example, once Derry "rebelled in

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<sup>121</sup>Truth (pseud.), Letter to the editor, Kirk Anderson, *Valley Tan*, January 11, 1859, 2.

<sup>122</sup>E. X. Y. (pseud.), Letter to the editor, *Valley Tan*, January 18, 1859, 2; emphasis his.

<sup>123</sup>D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 260.

spirit” against what he increasingly came to see as Mormonism’s oppression, he “kept a still tongue and minded my own business so that I was not suspected of harboring what they termed a spirit of apostasy. . . . I was not anxious to have the Danites lurking in my path.” He was especially wary when he noted “the anxiety of the inquisitors to know in what light we regarded President Young. Woe betide the man who dared to express a doubt as to the divinity of his calling, either as Prophet or lawful President. He was a marked man.”<sup>124</sup>

John Hyde asserted: “Some of the leading spirits of that band [the Danites] are still in Salt Lake City. Although they do not maintain their organization, being generally merged into ‘Brigham’s Life Guards,’ yet without the same name, they have performed the same deeds.” And, “They never threaten what they will not perform, and fear of risking the penalty withholds many from apostacy [sic].”<sup>125</sup>

Loba reported that Brigham Young, acting to “prevent or check” the great number of departures that he expected in the spring of 1857, “organized a body of 400 men, to whom he gave the name of ‘Wolf Hunters.’ The duty of this band was to assassinate every person who should attempt to leave the Valley without permission of the Prophet.” He also described a second function of this group: “If anybody was even accused of having indulged in any disparaging remarks concerning the head of the Church, that man was certain to disappear suddenly and mysteriously, —being privately destroyed.”<sup>126</sup>

Thomas Poulter felt himself to be a marked man when he delayed moving south at Brigham Young’s order because his wife was

<sup>124</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 34, 41.

<sup>125</sup>Hyde, *Mormonism*, 105, 102. Juanita Brooks noted that Hosea Stout used the term “Be’hoys” in such a way as to “suggest that the term was applied to a definite group of men,” and added that Bill Hickman referred to a group of “Brigham’s boys”; see Hosea Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*, edited by Juanita Brooks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 2:653 note 21.

<sup>126</sup>Loba, “Statement,” 4. John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (1877; reprinted Albuquerque: Tierra Blanca Publications, 2001), 290, similarly remarked: “It has always been a well understood doctrine of the Church that it was right and praiseworthy to kill every person who spoke evil of the

due to deliver. Six weeks later the bishop returned and transported the family south to the shores of Utah Lake. When they were permitted to return, Poulter could not join the others because he had only a wagon box without running gears. He was tempted to approach a stranger at the mouth of the Provo River about decamping to California but refrained because "I was afraid. I thought he might be one of the Twelve Apostles and so I returned to camp." When he was finally able to return to Bountiful, he says, "I could see I was spotted because I refused to move south at the call of the Bishop." Filled with apprehension, he made secret preparations to depart for California in 1859. He "gave my brother all my winter's food, pig and all, for I could not sell a thing at Bountiful without the Bishop hearing of it and he had often preached that the destroying angels would not save all such who wanted to leave Utah."<sup>127</sup>

These fears were not mere paranoid fancies as the assault on Gardiner demonstrates. He got as far as Fort Bridger in 1858 where he worked for the U.S. Army but returned to Salt Lake Valley because it was too late in the season to continue east. He was seen returning in company with an army officer. Three men whom he had formerly considered friends attacked him one night at a party to which they had all been invited. One knocked him down outside the house where the party was going on. He got up and staggered toward the door. A blow on the back of the neck knocked him headfirst against the door. The third "friend" then drew a revolver and "threatened if I made any resistance he would blow the top of my head off. Gardner's shouts brought help from inside the house. After recovering his breath, he went home. That same evening, however, seven men—three of whom he knew (he doesn't say if they were the same three)—barged into his home and would have dragged him from the house except for the fierce defense of his mother-in-law and a neighbor. After the "ruffians" left, his neighbor advised him to leave the house, disguised as a woman, and spend the night elsewhere. The next morning, he went to U.S. Marshal Peter Dotson, who advised him not to prosecute his attackers, saying, "If I did, I might get judgment against them. But afterwards I would not live long enough to cross the Street." When Gar-

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Prophet. This doctrine had been strictly lived up to in Utah, until the Gentiles arrived in such great numbers that it became unsafe to follow the practice."

<sup>127</sup>Poulter, "Life," 148-49, 150.

diner sought Cumming's advice, the governor told him to hold his ground in the city and that if anything happened, Cumming would "drench this d'd, city in blood." Unimpressed by the bluster, Gardiner pointed out "Even if such a thing should take place it may not save my life." He then appealed to General Johnston for protection, who responded by bringing him and his family under military escort to Camp Floyd where they stayed until they could leave the next spring. Gardiner concluded that his abuses occurred "because I did not obey Prest. Youngs [sic] Council," not to leave Utah.<sup>128</sup> He did not identify his attackers as Danites or suggest that they were acting on instructions from ecclesiastical superiors, but he also reported no public outrage at the attack.

Three of our group—John Hyde, Frederick Loba, and Frederick Gardiner—received their endowments. Gardiner does not comment further; but the other two, plus Stephen Forsdick and Charles Derry, perceived that those who knew "the mysteries" of Mormonism were at great peril if they wanted to leave Utah.

Forsdick mentioned the danger twice: "At that time, the Temple had not been built, but all the secret work was done in the Endowment House, with oaths and vows of secrecy. They had Destroying Angels to enforce the penalty for violating such oaths."<sup>129</sup> Later, when he was working at the sutler's store at Fort Laramie on his way east, he wrote: "A few days later Thomas Margetts' team drove up to the store door. . . . I learned now that he had left Salt Lake for good and had his wife with him. . . . I warned them to be on guard, because the Destroying Angel had passed by a few days before. Margetts had been through the Endowment House, and knew all the secret workings of the Mormons. He was a dangerous man for them to allow to leave. The Margetts party was soon on its way, and I was the last man who knew him to see him alive."<sup>130</sup> Margetts and his wife, and James Cowdy, with his wife and child, all disaffected Mormons, were murdered on September 6, 1856, some 125 miles west of Fort Kearny, but by the Cheyenne, not the Danites.<sup>131</sup>

John Hyde also mentioned these murders, which happened about three months after he left. Believing like Forsdick that the per-

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<sup>128</sup>Gardiner, *A Mormon Rebel*, 108–13.

<sup>129</sup>Forsdick, *Autobiography*, 30.

<sup>130</sup>Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail," 52.

<sup>131</sup>"Report by F. D. Richards and Daniel Spencer," in LeRoy R. Hafen

petrators must have been Danites, Hyde stressed the victims' endowed status: "This circumstance is still more significant, remembering that Margetts and Cowdy were both 'covenant-breaking' apostates; that they were returning to their native country; that they could make many terrible disclosures, and do Mormonism much injury in England; that it was Mormon law that they should die, and Mormon interest to kill them."<sup>132</sup>

Loba likewise believed those who had taken their endowments were in danger: "Vengeance . . . was especially wreaked on those who, after having been entirely initiated into all the mysteries of Mormondom, attempted to effect their escape from the Valley."<sup>133</sup>

Although Derry's bishop had urged him to be endowed and gave him a recommend, Derry did not pursue it because, as he wrote, "It was absolutely necessary for a man to keep his own counsel, as it was an easy matter to throw obstacles in his way and prevent him from leaving. I am satisfied my cattle and wagon had been taken from me for that purpose. But such as had received their endowments were in greater danger." Instead, Derry burned the recommend and "bided my time."<sup>134</sup>

#### SUMMARY

Reasons for leaving Mormonism and Utah—which were near synonyms in the late 1850s—were many and strongly felt. Wanting to

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and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856–1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), 220; Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier*, 2:601 note 75; and "James G. Willie Emigrating Company Journal," 8 September 1856, LDS Archives, as printed in Lynne Slater Turner, comp., *Emigrating Journals of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and the Hunt and Hodgett Wagon Trains* (n.p.: Privately printed, 1996), 28–29.

<sup>132</sup>John Hyde Jr., *Mormonism*, 105–6. The law Hyde referred to is probably Doctrine and Covenants 21:7 (1835 edition; 1981 edition 64:35–36): "The rebellious shall be cut off out of the land of Zion, and shall be sent away, and shall not inherit the land; for verily, I say that the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim, wherefore they shall be plucked out."

<sup>133</sup>Loba, "Statement," 4.

<sup>134</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 34–35, 51; see also 130–31 for a second-hand story he heard about someone who was threatened on orders of Brigham Young because he had "broken his endowment oaths."

*Brigham Young. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.*



improve their economic situation was a prominent factor for two of the group. One was pulled by family ties. All except Gardiner mentioned being disappointed by Mormonism in practice. The stress on obedience and not being free to think for oneself, much less speak out, particularly grated on Forsdick and Derry. Except for Poulter, polygamy loomed large as a tenet they could not subscribe to. Poulter and Gardiner do not appear to have lost their faith in the Church leaders like the others. Hyde and Forsdick left before the handcart tragedies, the Reformation, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre; the others mention them—especially the heavy-handedness of the Reformation—but no single episode appears to have been a deciding factor. On the other hand, fear of all kinds—from the general atmosphere to specific apprehensions—certainly intensified during the Reformation; and each departing man expressed it to a greater or lesser degree.

In this context, we may better evaluate Peter McAuslan's letter and the reasons he gave for leaving. To understand a central part of his letter—as well as a major contribution to the atmosphere of fear—it is necessary to understand the Parrish-Potter murders, which took place in March 1857 six months before the Mountain Meadows Massacre and six miles from where McAuslan was living. Like the Mountain Meadows Massacre, these murders have raised questions about the involvement of Church authorities.

## THE PARRISH-POTTER MURDERS

The details of the murders of William Parrish, his son William ("Beason") Parrish, and Gardiner G. "Duff" Potter on March 15, 1857, came to light after U.S. Judge John Cradlebaugh arrived in Utah in November 1858. According to his account, he received numerous reports about the Parrish-Potter murders, then twenty months old, as well as others and launched an investigation to identify and punish the perpetrators. He called a grand jury and "their attention was pointedly and specifically called to a great number of crimes that had been committed in the immediate vicinity. . . . The jury thus instructed, though kept in session two weeks, utterly refused to do anything, and were finally discharged as an evidently useless appendage of a court of justice."<sup>135</sup> It was following this futile effort that Cradlebaugh took testimony from two witnesses (Alvira L. Parrish and Orrin E. Parrish), six affidavits (Joseph Bartholomew, Zephaniah J. Warren, Alva A. Warren, James W. Webb, Thomas O'Bannion, and Leonard Phillips), and the confession of Abraham Durfee under oath, all of which were later published.<sup>136</sup>

Hosea Stout, a lawyer for the defense in Cradlebaugh's court, scornfully recorded in his diary that Durfee, like Bartholomew, "has turned states evidence and seeks to save his own neck by implicating others." The evidence, Stout wrote, showed "a one sided concern and is evidently a garbled statement got up and prepared by the court and his coadjutors for the purpose of criminating others."<sup>137</sup> Although Cradlebaugh's reputation among the Mormons was that he was likely insane and would do anything "to get hold of something to criminate

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<sup>135</sup>John Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons: Speech of Hon. John Cradlebaugh, of Nevada, on the Admission of Utah as a State* [Washington, D.C.: L. Towers & Co., 1863], 15-16. Later in 1859 Cradlebaugh gathered testimonies regarding the Mountain Meadows Massacre, some of which proved valuable in the trials of John D. Lee. These testimonies are also in the appendix to Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*, 27-43; see also Davis Bitton, "The Cradlebaugh Court (1859): A Study in Early Mormon-Gentile Misunderstanding," *Social Accommodation in Utah*, edited by Clark Knowlton (Salt Lake City: American West Center, University of Utah, 1975), 91.

<sup>136</sup>Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*, appendix, 33-61.

<sup>137</sup>Stout, March 31, and April 1, 1859, *On the Mormon Frontier*, 2:693. Stout may have been partially right about Durfee. In his four-page confes-



ex Gov. Young,” and Stout’s characterization of Durfee and Bartholomew was that they were only interested in saving themselves, the nine statements give a surprisingly consistent picture of the events.<sup>138</sup> In addition to the statements that Cradlebaugh took soon after the grand jury, John M. Stewart, former counselor to the bishop and justice of the peace, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Valley Tan* from San Bernardino, California; it is in essence a confession of his role in the affair.<sup>139</sup> It seems highly unlikely that Alvira or Orrin Parrish, the widow and son of William, would have collaborated on a story with either Durfee, one of the accomplices, or Bartholomew, a policeman and a participant in some of the bishop’s private council meetings before the murders, or that Durfee and Bartholomew’s stories would agree with Stewart’s, as they had not seen Stewart for some months before Cradlebaugh’s arrival. From these statements and a few minor sources, the murders can be reconstructed as follows:

Springville in Utah County was first settled in 1850. Indian troubles—the Walker War and other minor confrontations—had led the townsfolk to build a fort, then enlarge it, and finally to build a substantial mud wall around the town. This wall ranged from twelve feet high on the side facing the mountains, to ten feet, and lower still on the side away from the mountains. It had four stout city gates, at each end of both Center Street and Main Street, the intersection of the two forming the town square. The walls encompassed three-fourths of a

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sion, Durfee took care to state three times that Potter had told him that the Parrishes were only to be brought back, not killed. Does he protest too much? Orrin Parrish, one of the intended victims, claimed that Durfee nearly killed him. “Confession of Abraham Durfee,” 56–59; and “Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish,” 47, both in Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*.

<sup>138</sup>For Cradlebaugh’s reputation, see Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 4:495 note 51; and Church Historian’s Office, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *History of Brigham Young, 1847–1867*, edited by William L. Knecht and Peter L. Crawley (Berkeley, Calif.: MassCal Associates, 1964), 284.

<sup>139</sup>J. M. Stewart, Letter to the editor, July 4, 1859, *Valley Tan*, August 24, 1859, 2. Sometime after the murders, Stewart lost his faith and in July 1858 went to Camp Floyd to earn money for an outfit to take him to California. Don Carlos Johnson, *A Brief History of Springville, Utah, from Its First Settlement September 18, 1850 to the 18th Day of September, 1900* (Springville, Utah: William F. Gibson, 1900), 48–49.

square mile and were at Fourth North, Fourth South, Fourth East, and Fourth West.<sup>140</sup> The population of Springville in March 1859 was approximately 2,000; as many people left in the two years after the murders, it may not have grown much since March 1857.<sup>141</sup> In that period many of the leading men blended their ecclesiastical and municipal roles, making for "continual clashing."<sup>142</sup>

The late fall of 1856 and the winter and spring of 1857 saw the Reformation pursued in Springville as elsewhere, but it seems to have been pushed especially vigorously. Local historian Don Carlos Johnson described the excited atmosphere: "Some of the more impetuous became quite frantic in their religious fervor. 'All who are not for us, are against us,' and, 'It may be necessary to cleanse the platter,' were quotations frequently uttered by some whose zeal had run into fanaticism."<sup>143</sup> Alvira Parrish, widow of the murdered William Parrish, testified: "There had been public preaching at Springville, to the effect that no apostates would be allowed to leave, if they did, hog-holes in the fences would be stopped up with them. I heard these sermons. Elder Hyde and President Snow [James C. Snow, stake president], and others, preached that way. My husband was no believer in the doctrine of killing to 'save' as taught by the teachers."<sup>144</sup> In Salt Lake City just five weeks before the murders, Brigham Young preached at the

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<sup>140</sup>Johnson, *A Brief History of Springville*, 24; and Mary J. Chase Finley, *A History of Springville* (Springville, Utah: Art City Publishing Co., 1990), 18-19.

<sup>141</sup>Garland Hurt, "Appendix N: Population and Resources of the Territory of Utah" March 10, 1859, in James H. Simpson, *Report of Explorations Across the Great Basin in 1859* (1876; reprinted, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1983), 451-55. Johnson, *A Brief History of Springville*, 48-49, mentions that a number of people left town after the murders. Springville resident George W. Bean told Brigham Young: "There are many persons in Utah County who are uneasy. Some had openly apostatized, others wished to move to other parts of the Territory. Town property can be bought cheap especially at Springville." *Journal History*, April 20, 1859. My thanks to Ronald O. Barney for bringing Bean's letter to my attention.

<sup>142</sup>Johnson, *A Brief History of Springville*, 54.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>144</sup>"Testimony of Mrs. Alvira L. Parish [sic]," in Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*, 45.

## Tabernacle:

I have known a great many men who have left this Church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them. The wickedness and ignorance of the nations forbid this principle's being in full force, but the time will come when the law of God will be in full force. This is loving our neighbour as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it.<sup>145</sup>

Aaron Johnson, bishop of Springville since its founding, ardently espoused the Reformation. "Johnson had no clear distinction between the kingdom of God and the goals of the political community of Springville," observed the editor of his correspondence. "The affairs of the city were tightly interwoven with the affairs and goals of the church. He translated his struggles, persecution, and conflicts into a struggle of cosmic significance. The cosmic interpretation of the conflict—God's elect versus antichrist—appeared as a significant pattern in the intricate tapestry of ideas used by the bishop to explain his beliefs and actions."<sup>146</sup>

A staunch believer in Mormonism in the East, William Parrish's faith had wavered in Springville and he began to make plans to leave Utah with twenty-one-year-old Beason and nineteen-year-old Orrin, both unmarried. He would send for Alvira and their four younger boys when times were safer. According to an account written later by William's niece, William was "well to do, bought a fine carriage and two fine grey horses, other wagons, with goods for sale, but he was too prosperous, to suit the heads of the Church."<sup>147</sup> Prosperity is relative, however, for his home did not reflect it. The Parrish family rented one

<sup>145</sup>February 8, 1857, *Journal of Discourses* 4:220.

<sup>146</sup>Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *Aaron Johnson Correspondence* (Orem, Utah: Center for Research of Mormon Origins, 1990), viii–ix.

<sup>147</sup>Maryette Parrish Keir, *Memoir*, August 10, 1913, Parish-Keir Folder, Beattie Papers, Huntington Library, 8. Parrish actually had four gray horses. I am indebted to Rell G. Francis for a photocopy of this memoir. Giving some credence to Parrish-Keir's description is Alvira Parrish's testimony: "My husband had a Territorial order in his pocket book when he left home—called for \$500; I never got it back; when I got his pocket-book it had a few jewels in it belonging to my sons, a medal, a half dollar, [and] a

end of a double house owned by Thomas O'Bannion, who lived at the other end. The house, with two rooms in each end, stood north of the center of town near the home of William's brother, Ezra Parrish. Springville's historian Don Carlos Johnson described William as "a bold outspoken man."<sup>148</sup>

Three men—Abraham Durfee, Joseph Bartholomew, and John M. Stewart—left accounts of council meetings that Bishop Aaron Johnson held in the upstairs room of his house. Stewart was a highly respected man, being both counselor to the bishop and justice of the peace for the city. Bartholomew and Durfee, however, did not apparently hold ecclesiastical or municipal office. Durfee, then thirty and married with three children, called himself one of "the boys."<sup>149</sup> According to their statements two years after the murders, at least three council meetings took place. Because of the lapse of time, the dates are uncertain, but the descriptions are detailed enough that one meeting can be distinguished from another.

The first probably took place at the end of January 1857. It may actually have been two closely related meetings, one for the select inner circle and one for a larger group. Stewart mentioned that "Bishop (Johnson), Guymon [Noah T. Guymon or Guyman, the other counselor to the bishop], myself and some few others whom I cannot now identify composed this council." The purpose of the meeting was to:

hear a letter which he had just received from "President Young." He there read the letter, the purport of which was about this. He, Brigham, had information that some suspicious characters were collecting at the "Indian Farm," on Spanish Fork, and he wished him (Bishop Johnson) to keep a good look out in that direction; to send some one there to reconnoiter and ascertain what was going on, and if they (those suspicious characters) should make a break, and be pursued, which he required, he "would be sorry to hear a favorable report;" "but," said he, "the better way is to lock the stable door before

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twenty-five cent piece." "Testimony of Mrs. Alvira L. Parish," 44.

<sup>148</sup>Johnson, *A Brief History of Springville*, 40.

<sup>149</sup>Family group record for Abraham Durfee, retrieved on October 4, 2003, from [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org); "Affidavit of Abraham Durfee," in Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*, 66.

the horse is stolen.”<sup>150</sup>

Durfee’s description of the meeting mentions more attendees. Young’s letter was not read, just shown:

I was notified of a council by Wilber J. Earl in the month of January, 1857; he told me he wanted me to come to the Bishop’s house that evening. . . . The Bishop was there, A. F. McDonald, Wilber J. Earl, Abraham Durfee, Andrew Wiles, and Lorenzo Johnson, William Bird, and Gardner G. Potter and Joseph Bartholomew, Simmons Curtis and Lorin Roundy were there, and there were a number of others whose names I have forgotten. I do not know what the meeting had been called for; there were matters talked of concerning people going away. Some individuals were mentioned by the Bishop; he stated he had instructions in regard to them. The Bishop said he had received a letter, which he had in his hand; said that was sufficient for us to know, that he did not wish that any inquiry should go any further back than to himself. He stated that there were some individuals at the Indian farm who were about to leave; he said he wanted them watched and wanted some one to see when they would leave; he said there was word that they were going to steal some horses, and then going to leave the Territory. That was about all I recollect that transpired that night. The understanding was that the persons there were to watch generally for persons going away.<sup>151</sup>

Bartholomew gave a shorter version, but mentioned the same names as Durfee with the addition of John M. Stewart and “other persons I do not remember the name of. There were at least fifteen present.” He testified that he did not “recollect what was done at this first meeting; there was merely some talk about persons leaving and matters and things connected therewith, of which I do not remember the particulars.”<sup>152</sup>

A second meeting appears to have taken place between Feb-

<sup>150</sup>J. M. Stewart, Letter to the editor, July 4, 1859, *Valley Tan*, August 24, 1859, 2.

<sup>151</sup>“Confession of Abraham Durfee,” 56. According to the autobiography of Elizabeth Graham MacDonald, wife of Alexander F., the family’s last name was spelled MacDonalld, not McDonald. LDS Church Archives.

<sup>152</sup>“Affidavit of Joseph Bartholomew,” in Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*, 48.

ruary 21 and March 7, at which Duff Potter and Abraham Durfee were named to find out when the Parrishes were planning to leave for California. Potter, a man in his forties with three young children and a pregnant wife, was known as “a Mormon in good standing” and “a leading man.”<sup>153</sup> According to Bartholomew, the same people attended this meeting and

Potter and Durfee were “dropped off” and selected for the purpose of finding out what was going on. At the meeting the conversation was about the Parrishes, and about persons at the Indian farm. The meeting was called to enter into arrangements to find out what these persons expected to do. . . . I did not attend any meetings after this. At this meeting it was not known what the Parrishes intended to do, and nothing was decided as in [sic] regard to them. Bishop Johnson made a remark, however, that some of us would yet “see the red stuff run.” He said he had a letter, and the remark was made by some one that “dead men tell no tales.” I do not know whether any other meetings were held or not.<sup>154</sup>

Durfee’s account resembles Bartholomew’s:

It was some three weeks before the Parrishes and Potter was killed. The same persons were at this meeting that were at the first I have spoken of. N. T. Guyman was at this meeting; Bishop Johnson presided. There was something mentioned at this meeting about the Parrishes—that they were going to leave the Territory. The Bishop said there were some demands against them, for debts that they were owing; he did not state the debts. It was mentioned, either by the Bishop or McDonald, I don’t recollect which, to have some one to find out when the Parrishes were going to start; they nominated or named persons to know when the Parrishes were going to leave. My name (Abraham Durfee) was mentioned, and I objected to it; then they mentioned Potter’s name; and then the Bishop decided that both Potter and myself should try and learn when the Parishes were going to leave the Territory. The Bishop said he did not wish any one to decline when he was called upon. I then told the Bishop I would do

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<sup>153</sup>Family group record for Gardiner Godfrey Potter, retrieved on October 4, 2003, from [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org); Johnson, *A Brief History of Springville*, 40; and “Affidavit of Joseph Bartholomew,” 51.

<sup>154</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

the best I knew how, and Potter assented to the same.<sup>155</sup>

Toward the end of his confession, Durfee added, "In the second meeting which I attended Bishop Johnson said there were some of them that would see the blood run."<sup>156</sup> Although a debt was referred to in this meeting, it was not specified nor did the bishop say how it would be paid.

In Stewart's version, much of the talk was in secret groups:

In this council were, as well as I remember, Bishop A. Johnson, J. M. Stewart, A. F. McDonald, N. T. Guyman, L. Johnson, C. Lanford, and W. J. Earl. I am pretty certain there were others present, but I cannot now name them. O yes! Potter and Durfee were present. They came in with blankets wrapped around them. In this council there was a good deal of secret talking done by two or three individuals getting close together, and talking in suppressed tones, which I, being dull of hearing, did not understand. I did not try to understand, but some things I could not help understanding. I understood when Potter requested of the Bishop the privilege to kill Parrish wherever he could find "the damned curse," and the Bishop's reply, "Shed no blood in Springville." . . . I understood that blood would probably be shed, not *in* Springville, but *out* of it.<sup>157</sup>

A third council meeting was more specific about the debt Parrish allegedly owed. Stewart, Durfee, and Bartholomew did not attend this meeting, but Potter told Durfee about it. This meeting took place on either March 11 or 12, right after William Parrish and Potter had gone to Provo with a search warrant from Justice of the Peace Stewart to try to find the horses stolen from Parrish the day before. According to Durfee,

Potter told me that he went to the meeting after he returned from Provo. He told the meeting that he had found one span of the horses. I asked him what they said about the taking of the horses; he said that the Bishop told him that Parrish or his son was owing Bullock something in regard to an order that Parrish's son had traded to Bullock, and that he (the Bishop) wanted those horses placed where they belonged to answer the demand. That evening, at that meeting, Wilber J. Earl and A. F. McDonald were appointed to go and tell Parrish that

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<sup>155</sup>"Confession of Abraham Durfee," 56.

<sup>156</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>157</sup>Stewart, Letter to the editor, 2; emphasis his.

he should not receive those horses; this was told me by Potter.<sup>158</sup>

After the second meeting, when Potter and Durfee were assigned to learn when the Parrishes were leaving, they were both at Parrish's house almost every day, leading him to believe they too wished to leave. Durfee, according to Orrin Parrish, "pretended to father that he couldn't stand Mormonism any longer, and that he wanted to get out of the country."<sup>159</sup> Events escalated quickly. About March 8, "Mr. Johnson, Mr. Metcalf, and a person whose name witness does not recollect, came to father's as teachers, and questioned father about his religion, whether he prayed, and what he intended to do; don't recollect all that was said, but they didn't seem pleased with father's answer."<sup>160</sup>

One or two nights after the ward teachers' visit, William Parrish's four gray horses and carriage were stolen out of the stable on the property where he lived.<sup>161</sup> The next morning, Parrish went to see Durfee and ask his help in hunting for them. They went to John M. Stewart, the justice of the peace, for a search warrant. Although Stewart was willing to issue one, he would only deputize a sheriff, a deputy sheriff, or a Utah County constable. Eventually Stewart gave the search warrant to Potter, but whether the latter filled any of those roles is unknown. Potter and Parrish then went the five miles to Provo where they found two of the horses in Mayor B. Kimball Bullock's stable. Bullock said that someone had put them into his stable without his knowledge.<sup>162</sup>

The next day, March 12 or 13, Earl and MacDonald came to visit Parrish. According to Alvira Parrish's testimony,

A few days before my husband and son were murdered, Wilber J. Earl and Alx. F. McDonald came to my house about dusk in the evening and took my husband out. My son followed and McDonald drove him

<sup>158</sup>"Confession of Abraham Durfee," 57.

<sup>159</sup>"Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," 46.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*, 45-46. "Mr. Johnson" may have been Lorenzo Johnson, Aaron Johnson's brother who attended some of the council meetings, or possibly William D. Johnson, a policeman.

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.*, 45; "Confession of Abraham Durfee," 57; and "Affidavit of Thomas O'Bannion," 60, in Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*.

<sup>162</sup>Stewart, Letter to the editor, 2; "Confession of Abraham Durfee," 57; "Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," 45-46.



back. Then I went out and crossed the street into my nephew's house, and stood at the open window, the house being an unfinished one, and heard McDonald tell my husband that he could never see his grey horses any more. My husband replied that if he would let him go to Brigham Young, he would bring papers to show that the horses belonged to him and no one else. McDonald said we dont [sic] care for Brigham Young, and if you start to see him you will never live to get there. My husband then opened his bosom and told them if they wanted to kill him to do it now. McDonald said we dont want to shed blood now.<sup>163</sup>

Orrin Parrish added: "Father afterwards wrote on a piece of paper what was said to him. Witness [Orrin] thinks it read about as follows: 'Abram [Alexander] F. McDonald and Wilber J. Earl says that I (William R. Parish) will never see my grey horses any more, and if I start to the city to see Brigham Young, I will never live to get there.'<sup>164</sup> William's niece Maryette described his distress:

Though I was only a little girl, I remember his coming to our house, and walking the floor and talking, wondering what he had done that the Lord would have him persecuted in such a way. He wanted a court of justice, but there was no courts. Only Brigham Young's law, as President of the Church. Then he said he would go to Brigham Young. He wanted to know whether he sanctioned what had been done to him, but they told him, he could not see Brigham, and if he tried to go to him, he would be killed.<sup>165</sup>

The Parrishes' landlord and neighbor, Thomas O'Bannion, testified that one Moses Daley Jr., sent by whom is not stated, "came to me a few days before the murder, and told me to tell Parrish if he did not settle that matter between Beason and Bullock his blood would pay the debt." O'Bannion then added that Parrish had told him that "he had had a terrible dream, and should be murdered in his own house if he did not leave soon; wrote on a paper that his life had been threatened by Earl and McDonald."<sup>166</sup>

Durfee reported, "Parrish the next day told me that he had given up all hope of getting his horses, that they were gone. Parrish

<sup>163</sup>"Testimony of Mrs. Alvira L. Parish," 43.

<sup>164</sup>"Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," 46.

<sup>165</sup>Parrish Keir, *Memoir*, 8.

<sup>166</sup>"Affidavit of Thomas O'Bannion," 60.

... proposed leaving right away; he wanted to know if Potter and I would go with him. I told him I would. Potter said he would go too."<sup>167</sup> Orrin explained, "The arrangement was finally made, that father, brother, Durfee, Potter and myself, were to start on Sunday night, the 14th of March, 1857. They talked the matter over, and concluded that it would not be safe to start in the daytime; if we did we would be followed and killed as apostates. It was arranged to go out after dark, and meet about a quarter of a mile south of the city wall, at a corner of the lane fence."<sup>168</sup> Orrin was mistaken in the date; Sunday was the 15th.

Orrin and Durfee's accounts together build a picture of the events of March 15. About 10:00 A.M., Durfee and Potter arrived at the Parrish house, which police were watching. Potter offered to take some of Parrish's things out to allay suspicion. Potter then went off with gloves, a bridle, a gun, tape, and other items. About 2:00 P.M., William Parrish and Durfee left the house after giving directions to Beason and Orrin about where to meet. William and Durfee left town through the east gate, then went south, crossed Hobble Creek and came to Dry Creek. Here Parrish said he would wait until it was time to meet his sons. Durfee started back to town to get the boys ready; when he approached the house, Potter came out and wanted to know the plan, as he had some of Parrish's things and wanted to take them to him. Potter then left.<sup>169</sup>

What exactly happened to Parrish and Potter after this point is not clear, since neither lived to tell. Durfee reported the story as William Bird, who admitted to him that he was the killer, told him. As Potter was leaving town, he had called on Bird and asked him to accompany him "to do this deed." At the corner of the fence where the two parties were to meet, Bird lay down and stationed himself. When it was fully dark, Potter and Parrish walked along the fence toward the meeting spot. As they approached, Bird shot at them and killed Potter, mistaking him for Parrish in the dark. Bird then got up and tackled Parrish. In a fierce struggle, Bird drew his knife and stabbed him repeatedly. "Bird said, after Parrish was down he gave him a lick which cut his throat. He never said anything about any other person's being there, helping him. Bird said, after he got through with the old man,

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<sup>167</sup>"Confession of Abraham Durfee," 57.

<sup>168</sup>"Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," 46.

<sup>169</sup>*Ibid.*, 46-47; "Confession of Abraham Durfee," 57-58.

he took Potter's gun and his own, and got into the corner of the fence again, to be ready for us."<sup>170</sup>

Meanwhile, under cover of darkness Durfee went with Beason and Orrin west on Center Street and out through the west gate, then south to the southwest corner of the city wall. Here Durfee told Orrin to wait and asked Beason to go with him to find some things he had hidden earlier in the day. While they were gone, Orrin heard a shot. When Durfee and Beason returned, he asked what it meant. Durfee thought it was their father or Potter giving them a signal or it might be Indians. When they got near the meeting place, Durfee called Potter's name three times, but got no answer. Within fifteen or twenty feet of the corner of the fence, a voice called Durfee's name, he answered, and a shot rang out, that killed Beason. At this point, Orrin's and Durfee's stories diverge. Orrin said that Durfee then pointed a gun at him and "bursted a cap, the gun failing to go off." Orrin turned and ran for town. Durfee claimed that, rather than firing at Orrin, he leaped toward a hollow that crossed the road.<sup>171</sup>

Another gun, not Durfee's, fired two or three shots from the corner of the fence at the fleeing Orrin. Orrin, however, managed to climb the city wall at a place where it was only about seven feet high, but hurt himself badly in jumping down from it. He ran to his Uncle Ezra Parrish's house where "some ten or twelve men were standing in the street to the left. Witness [Orrin] got in so quick they could not catch him."<sup>172</sup> Durfee said that, as Orrin was running, someone "sprang" from the fence and shot after Orrin, and then called to Durfee: "You need not be afraid, it was all right." This individual was Bird. Durfee went back into town through the south gate and soon met Cyrus Sandford, the city marshal, who took him into custody, brought him to the bishop's yard, and turned him over to H. H. Carnes, the captain of the police.<sup>173</sup> Orrin testified that the voice calling Durfee's name was Carnes's as "he has a peculiar voice;

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<sup>170</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>171</sup>"Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," 46-47; "Confession of Abraham Durfee," 58-59.

<sup>172</sup>"Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," 47.

<sup>173</sup>"Confession of Abraham Durfee," 58-59.

I knew it well, and cannot be mistaken."<sup>174</sup> Thus, perhaps Bird was not alone.

The search for Orrin began quickly. According to O'Bannion, the Parrishes' neighbor,

Several persons came in front of Parrishes; some went in. I heard Carnes ask for Orrin; he said he had a writ for him. They afterwards came into my house and asked for Parrish; I asked which Parrish; Carnes replied, "any Parrish." They then searched my house and granary. H. H. Carnes, Lehi Curtis, Moses Daley [Jr.], Sanford Fuller, Richard Bird, Henry Rollins, and William Johnson were there. Carnes said they must make a clean sweep or search of it; said he always did what he undertook. My best recollection is that the words used were, a clean sweep of it. . . . Didn't say why they wanted Parrish. Curtis and Fuller appeared excited when they were making the search; when they opened my granary door Fuller cocked his gun.<sup>175</sup>

Not finding him there, they went to the uncle's house. "Wilber J. Earl, H. H. Carnes, Daniel Stanton, Sanford Fuller, Andrew Wiles, and a man by the name of Curtis, came to uncle's; Carnes asked for me, said he wanted me, dead or alive. Witness was sick from hurt in jumping the wall, and had laid down in bed; made me get up to see if I was shot. . . . Said he had a writ for me, and I must go with him." Orrin's aunt, however, refused to let the men take him and instead said they could set a guard over him, which they did.<sup>176</sup>

About 10 P.M. the captain of the police, H. H. Carnes, called Joseph Bartholomew and some ten or fifteen others to the schoolhouse, the largest building in town. They were formed into a company and, with a wagon and team, marched south.<sup>177</sup> John M. Stewart reported:

I knew nothing of . . . the deeds having been done, until . . . I was awakened, and requested to go and hold an inquest over some dead bodies. W. J. Earl, one of the city aldermen, and my predecessor in the magisterial office, made this requirement of me, and undertook to dictate [to] me in the selecting of a jury. . . . We proceeded along the main road, south, about one miles from the public square, to the cor-

<sup>174</sup>"Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," 47.

<sup>175</sup>"Affidavit of Thomas O'Bannion," 60.

<sup>176</sup>"Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," 47.

<sup>177</sup>"Affidavit of Joseph Bartholomew," 48.

ner of a field known as Childs' corner.<sup>178</sup>

When they came to the bodies, Stewart, the justice of the peace now acting as coroner, with twelve men making up the coroner's jury, examined the bodies.<sup>179</sup>

The group then picked up the three bodies, placed them in the wagon, and brought them back to the schoolhouse. "A guard was put around the school house that night," reported Bartholomew. "I was called to take charge of the house, and to wash the bodies and lay them out. Edward Hall and Thomas Cordingly (since dead) assisted me." He described the wounds on each body, particularly those on "old man Parrish," who was "cut all over with knife wounds. His throat was cut in the left side. He was cut at least fifteen times in the back, in front, on his arms, the hands, in fact all over."<sup>180</sup>

The next morning, March 16, a farce of a "court of inquiry" was held. The jury consisted of Earl's handpicked personnel. Despite his resentment, Stewart "considered my position for a moment, and concluded to suffer myself to be dictated to, unless an attempt should be made to lead me to the commission of crime."<sup>181</sup> Durfee explained his part: "The next morning when the hearing of myself and Orrin Parrish was before John M. Stewart, I knew that Bird was the man, but I was afraid to state it. Bishop Johnson told me that morning what evidence I should give; and he said if I told what I learned that night, they would send me the same way; I stated to the justice what the Bishop

<sup>178</sup>Stewart, Letter to the editor, 2.

<sup>179</sup>Coroner's Inquest, March 15, 1857, Hosea Stout Miscellaneous Papers, Utah State Historical Society.

<sup>180</sup>"Affidavit of Joseph Bartholomew," 49.

<sup>181</sup>Stewart, Letter to the editor, 2; and Coroner's Inquest. The jurors were: A. F. McDonald, foreman, M. N. Crandall, N. J. Guyman, Uriah Curtis, S. P. Curtis, John Dayley, William Smith, G. McKenzie, Philo Dibble, Wilber J. Earl, Joseph Bartholomew, and Thomas G. Sprague. Cradlebaugh pointed out that many of these men were the same as appointed to the grand jury for his investigation two years later, "the Mormon county court in Utah having," he said, "the selecting of the Grand and trial jurors for the Federal courts." Stewart, Durfee, and Bartholomew also named many of the same men as participants in Bishop Aaron Johnson's council meetings. Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*, 53.

told me to say.”<sup>182</sup> Orrin too had been warned to say nothing: “Durfee and I were sworn. Durfee was examined first; don’t recollect all he said; he had snapped a cap at the enemy. I told them I knew nothing about it more than Durfee had stated; that I saw nobody, but saw something dark toward the corner of the fence. My uncle got a chance to speak to me in the morning, and he told me to say that I knew nothing; said that if they found out that I knew anything, they would kill me.”<sup>183</sup>

Stewart well “understood that it was only to be done as a show.” Durfee “told what he had been instructed to tell. Parrish, as might have been expected, chose not to know anything of consequence. It was certainly wise in him to be ignorant.”<sup>184</sup> The jury’s verdict was predictable: “They came to their deaths by the hands of an assassin, or assassins, to the jury unknown.” Stewart continued, “The law of the Territory made it my duty to make returns of my proceedings, in this case, to the County Court, but the Bishop told me not to do it, and I obeyed him.” Stewart ended his letter to the editor by writing,

I am perfectly aware that that portion of the community who have no knowledge of the under-currents and wire-workings of Mormonism will consider me a “poor concern,” for suffering myself to be swayed in my official duties by ecclesiastical dignitaries; for suffering myself, in the case above mentioned, to be governed by the Bishop. But I perfectly understood that to act without counsel, or to disobey counsel, was to transgress; and if I had never understood it before I could not help but understand it then, by the example of the three dead bodies right before my eyes, that “The way of the transgressor is (was) hard.”<sup>185</sup>

Durfee and Orrin were discharged. Alvira Parrish went to see Brigham Young four months later, but he “told me he knew nothing of the affair,” she said. “Springville was fifteen years ahead of him. He would have stopped it had he known anything about it.”<sup>186</sup> No further action to apprehend the murderers took place until two years

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182“Confession of Abraham Durfee,” 59–60.

183“Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish,” 47.

184Stewart, Letter to the editor, 2.

185Ibid.

186“Testimony of Mrs. Alvira L. Parish,” 44.

later when Judge Cradlebaugh empanelled the grand jury.

Alan P. Johnson, Aaron Johnson's great-great-grandson and biographer, exonerates his ancestor of any blame and implies that the Parrishes were killed because they were fleeing because of "substantial debts [owed] to various people in the valley."<sup>187</sup> He selectively quotes T. B. H. Stenhouse's 1873 characterization of Aaron Johnson as "a very quiet, inoffensive man. He has a well-regulated and, for aught the public know, a peaceable home, with ten excellent wives and a long string of children," and A. F. MacDonald as "a thorough Scotchman, a Gaelic Highlander, born and reared with the best surroundings of Presbyterianism, a man of unfailing honesty, strict integrity, and truthfulness," while conveniently ignoring Stenhouse's assertion in the same paragraph that "the facts of this deed of blood clearly exhibit that it was a religious murder. The major part of the men charged with compassing the death of the Parrishes never would have soiled their hands with the blood of these or any other persons on their own account." Alan Johnson also fails to quote Stenhouse's statement five pages later "that all this was the work of the 'Reformation,' and its teaching about killing apostates 'to save them,' there can be no doubt."<sup>188</sup>

It is true that the Parrishes may have owed B. K. Bullock, Provo's mayor, some sort of debt, but it not clear why Bishop Johnson considered himself responsible for enforcing its repayment. Even so, the theft, or confiscation, of the horses and carriage would seem to have balanced the books, though illegally. Some doubt is

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<sup>187</sup>Alan Johnson, *Aaron Johnson: Faithful Steward* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1991), 561. Johnson also asserts that "along with others, he [Aaron Johnson] was completely exonerated" (562), when in fact the grand jury was dismissed after failing to make findings of any sort. When the territorial marshal tried to serve a warrant for Aaron Johnson, he found that Johnson had fled to a hideout in the mountains where he stayed for several months.

<sup>188</sup>Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, 462, 467. Historian Glen Leonard, "Recollections and Reconstructions from the Killing Fields at Mountain Meadows," paper presented at the Mormon History Association annual meeting, Provo, Utah, May 22, 2004, 8, has called Stenhouse's account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre a "realistic narrative" and "a reasoned history." Photocopy in my possession. The same can apply to his evaluation of the Parrish-Potter murders.

thrown on debt as an explanation, however, by the fact that, after Alvira Parrish visited Brigham Young in July 1857, Young wrote to Aaron Johnson, who returned the two horses in Bullock's possession to her.<sup>189</sup> Lysander Gee of Tooele had the other two, although there is no indication from any surviving source that the Parrishes owed him anything. A few days after his father's murder, Orrin Parrish said he saw Gee and another man riding them in Echo Canyon; in the fall of 1858, Gee was driving them in Salt Lake City.<sup>190</sup> They were apparently never returned. Even if the purported debt was legitimate, no legal code allowed murder to justify debt.

Could these murders be an instance of blood atonement? This tenet, often preached during the Reformation, held that Christ's redemption was inadequate to atone for some sins and that the offender could make restitution only if his or her own blood was shed. Typically the sins that required such sacrifice were listed as murder, adultery, and apostasy. An anonymous Mormon wrote to the *Valley Tan*: "Many of our Church members . . . are opposed to many acts of violence that are done under a pretended right and color of our faith. I never did and never can believe in the doctrine that it was right to take a persons [sic] life, for the purpose of saving him; yet many of my brothers differ with me on this—they think that when there is danger of Apostatizing they should by a *premature transition* from this world be secured the happiness of a better one."<sup>191</sup>

In addition to the preaching on blood atonement in Springville that Alvira Parrish described, Leonard Phillips of Provo testified to Judge Cradlebaugh: "On the Sunday night of the murder I was at a meeting in the street in Provo. President [James C.] Snow, President of this State [Stake], and others, preached from a wagon. Their preaching about that time was pretty much about apostates and persons go-

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<sup>189</sup>Brigham Young, Letter to Aaron Johnson, July 30, 1857, Young letterbook, as referenced in Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, 528 note 120; and "Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," 45, in which he said, referring to the two horses in Bullock's stable, "got them back after father's death from the Bishop."

<sup>190</sup>*Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>191</sup>*Valley Tan*, December 17, 1858, 3; emphasis in original.



ing to leave the Territory, and how they would be disposed of.”<sup>192</sup>

Because bloodshed was required, slitting the throat was understood as a sign of blood atonement. Beason Parrish and Duff Potter died from bullets, but William Parrish was stabbed multiple times and had cuts to the throat. Alvira Parrish, Orrin Parrish, Bartholomew, Durfee, and Stewart each described these wounds in some detail.<sup>193</sup> The coroner’s inquest record, signed by the twelve picked jurists, stated that William Parrish had “many knife wounds inflicted on his body, and especially in his throat.”<sup>194</sup>

Four days after the murders, Winslow Farr of Big Cottonwood Ward wrote in his diary, “Went to the evening meeting I heard some good preaching and was glad to hear that the law of God has been put in force in Springville on Some men who deserved it.”<sup>195</sup> Hosea Stout had also heard about the murders on the same day, but added more cautiously, “The circumstances and how I have not learned.” Stout made no further mention of the matter until two years later when Cradlebaugh began his investigation. Then Stout criticized Cradlebaugh’s methods.<sup>196</sup>

Historian Thomas G. Alexander concedes, speaking of the Potter-Parrish murders, “Some members may have taken the talk about blood atonement to heart.” Paul H. Peterson, author of the most thorough study to date of the Reformation, believes that these murders were not a strict case of blood atonement but rather were intended “to purify the environment or to avenge past wrongs. Their killers were probably unconcerned with expiation, forgiveness of sin, or the eventual fate of the Parishes [sic] souls. Applying twisted logic in a time of emotional frenzy, they probably reasoned that the Parrishes were ene-

<sup>192</sup>“Affidavit of [Leonard] Phillips,” in Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*, 60. Phillips’s first name comes from an affidavit signed by him and five others, asking for military protection and published as “Important from Utah,” *New York Times*, April 29, 1859, 1.

<sup>193</sup>“Testimony of Mrs. Alvira L. Parish,” 44; “Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish,” 47; “Affidavit of Joseph Bartholomew,” 49; “Confession of Abraham Durfee,” 59; Stewart, Letter to the editor, 2.

<sup>194</sup>Coroner’s Inquest.

<sup>195</sup>Winslow Farr, Diary, March 19, 1857, typescript, 25, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>196</sup>Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier*, 2:624, 690–93.

mies of God and harbingers of evil that needed to be eliminated.”<sup>197</sup> There seems little doubt that the local Church leaders instigated the murders, but whether higher authorities were involved cannot be easily determined. The letter Stewart described at the first council meeting as being from Brigham Young was about preventing people from leaving, not about killing specific individuals. Durfee’s statement about that meeting is more suggestive, that the bishop “had instructions” in regard to “some individuals.” Bartholomew, in recounting what happened at the second council meeting, juxtaposed seeing “the red stuff run” and the bishop’s letter, but did not explicitly state that one was linked to the other. Phillips’ testimony before Cradlebaugh established that, on the night of the murders, the stake president in Provo asked a man to take a letter to Bishop Johnson but does not identify the letter’s author.<sup>198</sup> On the other hand, Alvira’s testimony that A. F. MacDonald had said, “We dont [sic] care for Brigham Young,” would support the idea of a local decision to carry out the murders.

A definitive study has yet to be done. Until then U.S. Indian agent Garland Hurt’s comment about Springville is still apt: “The tragical murder of Potter and the two Parishes [sic], in the spring of 1857, must ever cleave like bird-lime to its history.”<sup>199</sup> But for the purposes of this study, the relevant fact is that Peter McAuslan and others believed the Parrishes were killed because they were considered apostates.

#### PETER MCAUSLAN’S LETTER TO ROBERT SALMON

This letter in Peter McAuslan’s handwriting appears to be a draft; presumably he sent a final version to Salmon in Scotland. Consisting of a long sheet of pale blue ledger paper folded to make four pages, it was discovered among McAuslan’s papers and books in Live

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<sup>197</sup>Alexander, *Utah, The Right Place*, 125; Peterson, *The Mormon Reformation*, 75, 77 note 59. In the footnote, Peterson added, “Whether or not it was a blood atonement killing, of course, does not lessen the abominable nature of the deed.”

<sup>198</sup>“Affidavit of [Leonard] Phillips,” 60–61.

<sup>199</sup>Hurt, “Appendix N,” in Simpson, *Report of Explorations Across the Great Basin*, 453. Similarly, “A.B.C.,” correspondent, “Important from Utah,” *New York Times*, April 29, 1859, 1, wrote “The evidence adduced is astounding, and will form a dark, dark chapter in our history.”

Oak, California, where he had settled.<sup>200</sup> Scribbles, as if he were trying out his pen, appear at the top of the first page and the bottom of the last; a few numerical calculations dot the top and bottom of the last page. The letter ends abruptly, without a closing. I have added paraphrasing, initial capitals, and punctuation for ease of reading.

Robert Salmon was born in 1812 in Balloch, Dunbartonshire, Scotland. The Salmon and McAuslan families had known each other in Kirkintilloch (northeast of Glasgow), Denny (near Falkirk), and Barrhead (near Paisley), where both successively moved to find work in calico printing factories. McAuslan was instrumental in converting Salmon to Mormonism and baptized him on March 3, 1849, in Denny, where they were sharing a room.<sup>201</sup> Salmon was married and had seven children but was probably rooming with McAuslan while looking for work, intending to move his family from Kirkintilloch once he obtained a position.<sup>202</sup>

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Mary'sville [California], Decr 1860

Mr. Robart Salmon

Dear Brother

I received your letter some time ago and was happy to learn that you were all well and in good spirits. I am happy to inform you that we are also well and in as good spirits now as I ever was, and I might add, better than I ever was in the Mormon Church, but I know that you cannot believe that according to your present faith, but no matter, all is right.

I still intertain the same faith in regard to the First principles of the Gosple of Christ, that is, as farr as Faith, Hope and Charity is concerned, or in other words, I believe and do know that I enjoy the

<sup>200</sup>I am grateful to Donna Ferguson, McAuslan's great-great-granddaughter, for a photocopy.

<sup>201</sup>Falkirk and Barrhead Branches, Scotland, "Record of Members," British Mission, LDS Church Archives; Peter McAuslan, Letter to Agnes McAuslan Allan, March 1, 1884; photocopy in my possession.

<sup>202</sup>William Gibson, then president of the Edinburgh Conference of the Church, said that many in those days of high unemployment and low wages were forced to work forty or fifty miles away from home, seeing their families only on Sunday. Gibson, *Journal*, Vol. 1:78, LDS Church Archives.

Spirit of God more so then ever, and that Spirit leads me to have faith, hope and charity, and to follow after truth wherever I may find it Independent of Churches with there Dogmas or Prophets and Priests that preach that your Salvation depends on Paying up your Tithing that they might live in ease and Splendor and in the injoyment of all the pleasure that this world can bestow!<sup>203</sup>

More particularly I will state a few of the reasons I had for leaving Salt Lake and the Mormon Church. First I was taught to believe when I was in the Old Cuntry that when I got to the So-called Zion I would have the pleasure of seeing and hearing a Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Lord. I was sorrowfully dissappointed after being there over 5 years. I was forsed to come to the conclusion that Brigham Young is no more inspired by the Allmighty then many other men are, who are out of the Pale of Mormondom.

Of course you say I have no right to judge the Servent of the Lord. Well I have not time to discuss this subject at this time, but would mearly say that I clame it as a right to judge all things for myself, feeling as I do that I shall have to give an account for myself of the course I persue in this life. If I take a right course, I shall receive the reward. If I take a wrong course, I shall suffer the Penalty anexed thereunto, and of course I would consider myself a fool or a dupe to expect any man to be responceable for my actions. ~~Hence you can see at once from these few remarks that that~~

The Doctrin of doing as you are told, whither it appears to you to be right or rong, was most strongly urged the last year or two that I was thare, so much so that I could not believe it, and of course I found out that I could not be consistently a Mormon.<sup>204</sup> Such a doctrin as that in the hands of uninspired men, even suppose them to be of Spotless Character, would in my estamation lead to most fearfull consequences. [p. 2] What do I suppose those consequences to be, you

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<sup>203</sup>When he left Utah, McAuslan owed \$91.77 in combined labor and produce tithing. Although others were also in arrears, this amount was greater than the average. Spanish Fork Financial Records, LDS Church Archives, 102.

<sup>204</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, 33, had similarly complained: "It seemed to me that the leading men were set upon crushing out what manhood there was in the people by their oppressions, and at the same time the burden of their teaching was, 'obedience to counsel,' 'follow your leaders,' 'do as you are told,' 'heed the counsel of the living oracles.'"

might ask? In my humble oppion it requires no Prophetic Eye to See what those conciquences would be.

Firstly, instead of man excercising those reasonable facculties that God has indowed him with for the discovery of truth, they would lie in a dorment condition. Hence an end to progression and the expansion of his intellect, and instead of God's purposes ~~being~~ towards man being aided (which are in my oppion man's development phisically, intelectully and morally), they would be retarded.<sup>205</sup> Therefore, you see, I desided for myself—after earnest Prayer to the Allmighty to aide me in the discovry of truth and it's addoption, and the renouncement of error—that such a doctrin could never come from the Allmighty, and of course must have been concocted by man for the subjugation and inslavement of his fellow man, both Soul and body. Such is the ultimate [fate] of the faithfull followers of Brigham Young.

As I know from expearience that I cannot effect your faith in Mormonism or, in other words, what you understand to be Mormonizm in Scotland, neither do I wish to, but would ask you to go ahead and prove it for your self and not depend upon my expearience in Mormonizm. I am of the many but one (judging from my own past expearience) [and] am convinced that you will do that anyway, but as you have asked my reasion's for leaving Mormonizm, I shall give you a few of the most prominent of them, without going into detail.

That I might put no Stumbling Block in your path, I might add that I do know that there are many just as good men as I would wish to ascocaite with whose expearience in Mormonizm has made them Stronger in the Faith. And I must say that my feelings are very

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<sup>205</sup>Sociologist Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 242–43, observed: “The emphasis upon the free agency of man, upon man’s development through his own effort, and upon the possibility of the individual’s achieving Godlike status” contradicted the “church claiming descent from the rule of a specially chosen prophet-founder and embodying a hierarchy of office and decision-making.” The result is an inherent conflict between individual effort and obedience; and although the Church has made an accommodation for individual participation within the authoritarian structure, “it remains a potential source of strain, and for the intellectuals it is an actual source of difficulty.” William Mulder gives examples of “no room for a loyal opposition” in *Homeward to Zion*, 227–30.

Charityable towards them as a people, that is to those who are honest in the faith.<sup>206</sup> And although such do intertain ubsurd doctrins, they are not to blame. It requires time and expearience to develop them; then they shall get rid of there [their] absurdities just as I as one of the many have down [done] before them.

But I think I here you exclave, "Poor fellow! I am vexed for you. You have got into darkness, but I hope and Pray that you might be brought back to the light again, yea to the glorious light of the latter day Gosple." I am thankful to you for such feelings and accept them as a token of the magnaminity of your Soul towards me.

But to return to my reasons. The Mormons do intertain doctrins [that] when they are put in force are destructive of the rights of there fellow man.<sup>207</sup> Do I know this? Yes I do. What are they? When the Celestial law is fully put in force there shall no one leave the Mormon church and go over to the enemy.<sup>208</sup> The enemy here alluded to is the world or all who do not believe in

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<sup>206</sup>Compare with Derry: "I have no desire to create the impression that the mass of the people of Utah were bad. On the contrary, I am satisfied there were many God-fearing people who had made great sacrifices for the truth." Hyde likewise commended the people in a letter addressed to Brigham Young: "I admire the industry of your people, their notable labors and their general sincerity." Forsdick echoed these sentiments: "As a whole, I consider the Mormon people a kind-hearted and generous class of people. They were sincere in their belief, which is shown by the sufferings they endured in crossing the plains and settling up of the valley." Derry, *Autobiography*, 38; Hyde, *Mormonism*, 333; Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail to Zion," 49.

<sup>207</sup>Compare with Alexander, *Utah: The Right Place*, 133: "Although the Mormons suffered and fought for their religious rights in the Midwest, they disregarded the rights of those who differed with them in Utah. In Utah, the property and, in some cases, the lives of dissidents and non-Mormons were clearly not secure."

<sup>208</sup>Celestial law refers to all the laws of God. They are often spoken of separately, such as the "celestial law of tithing," the "celestial law of consecration," or the "celestial law of marriage" (i.e., plural marriage). McAuslan is here referring to blood atonement. "A Voice from the Temple," *Times and Seasons* 5 (December 1, 1844): 728; Orson Pratt, "Equality and Oneness of the Saints," *Seer* 2 (July 1854): 291. See also Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 17, who refers to the "celestial law of marriage."

Mormonism—"all who are not for us are against us" and of course enmities.<sup>209</sup> How do they mean to accomplish this? The Angle of the Lord shall [p. 3] destroy them, or in other words, the dannits shall slay them. The dannits are a well disipled branch of the Preisthood organized with captains over Tens and Fifties to exacute a very prominent part of gods judgments upon the Earth.<sup>210</sup> Who did I here preach these doctrins? John Young, Head Patrerch of the Church, and many other dignatrysts of the church.<sup>211</sup> In fact I do not mean to write any thing in this letter but what I do know and can vouch for as being doctrins intertainied by the Mormon Church in Salt Lake. I heard the the [sic] Bishop of the 19 Ward declare that if the Celestial Law was put in force, they the people of the Lord would be cutting one an-

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<sup>209</sup>McAuslan may be referring to a sermon by Orson Hyde on October 25, 1857: "When that day comes, . . . those who are not right and pure will be devoured and destroyed. . . . If we do not live our religion, we shall be consumed in that day. . . . Why have they not yielded obedience to the laws of the kingdom of God and taken upon them the yoke of Christ? It does seem to me that persons holding that position are ready to turn to the enemy. . . . 'He that is not for us is against us.'" *Journal of Discourses* 5:355–56.

<sup>210</sup>This description of the Danites from the "History of Joseph Smith," dated October 1838, was published in the *Millennial Star* 16 (July 22, 1854): 458–59, the year that McAuslan emigrated to Utah: Sampson Avard "proceeded to administer to the few under his control, an oath, binding them to everlasting secresy [sic] to everything which should be communicated to them by himself. Thus Avard initiated members into his band, . . . which *he* named *Danites*. . . . He held meetings to organize his men into companies of tens and fifties, appointing a captain over each company." Emphasis in original.

<sup>211</sup>Brigham Young's eldest brother, John Young, was sustained as a patriarch in October 1853. Obituary, *Journal History*, April 27, 1870. McAuslan most likely heard him on November 26, 1856, when Young preached in Salt Lake City's Nineteenth Ward, where McAuslan was then living. Nineteenth Ward, Salt Lake Stake, Record of Members 1850–1856 and Historical Record, LDS Church Archives, 116. However, John Young was never Church Patriarch. John Smith, the oldest son of Hyrum Smith, was Church Patriarch from 1855 to 1911.

other's throats.<sup>212</sup>

We were also taught—that our minds might be prepared for coming events—to beware of Sympthy, as that feeling would destroy a great many in this Curch. How thact to beware of Sampty [sympathy]? Because when that time comes and is at hand you may see the dead Bodys of your Fathers, your Brothers, or your nearest, dearest relatives and friends lying upon the Streets, and if you should pass by, say not a word to anybody, nither ask the cause, just conduct yourself as if nothing had happened. All is right, it was down [done] by athrowity.<sup>213</sup>

But I wish to inform you that it is not so. Those who renounce the faith and who have courage enough to speek what he dose think and know would meet with such a fate faster than a murderer or an adulterer. Do I know of any such cases? Yess I do. Not that I saw the deed commited with my own eyes, but this deed that I am going to relate was commited at the Town of Springville only 6 miles from Spanish Fork where I resided at that time, and the people not being atall prepared to act by the above council, “pass by and not say a word about it,” there secret deeds were published upon the house tops. So I got to know as much about it as if I had seen it with mine eyes, a day or

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<sup>212</sup>Alonzo H. Raleigh, then bishop of the Nineteenth Ward, recorded in his Journal, December 1, 1856, holograph, 151–52, LDS Church Archives: “I declared my intentions to carry out the law of God, to the verry letter in Sanctifying Israel & cleanzing the inside of the Platter by wiping out inniquity from our midst.”

<sup>213</sup>George A. Hicks, who lived in Spanish Fork before and during the time that McAuslan lived there, described John Young’s visit on September 27–29, 1856, in a similar way: “It was during the Reformation that that liable [sic] doctrine known as ‘blood atonement’ was first preached in Utah. John Young, that same one man that started the Reformation in Spanish Fork . . . said there were hypocrites in Zion and that [they] were not fit to live and the time had come that their blood would have to be shed to save them and he continued, ‘If you should find your fathers or your mothers by the way side with their throats cut go on about your business and say nothing about it for it would be all right. Zion must be purified.’” “History of George Armstrong Hicks Written by Himself,” [1878], typescript by Kent V. Marvin, Mary Anne Loveless, and Karen Kenison, chap. 10. I am grateful to Will Bagley for a photocopy of this account.



so after it was done.<sup>214</sup>

A Father and Two sons had renounced the Faith and disided [decided] on leaving the Territory. A few days before they decided to start, there carrage [carriage] and horses were stolen out of ther stable by night. There was another man, a Dannit, acting in consort with them with the pretended intention of leaving at the same time.<sup>215</sup> The time appointed came; they left the town at a time when they thought they would be lest [least] suspected, prepared with laraets to captured their own horses as they knew the field that they were in.<sup>216</sup> They had not proceeded far when they came to were [where] other Dannits were lieing in wate [wait]. The work of death commenced. In the struggle the Traitor Dannit fell with the Father and one son. The other son, making his escape unhurt, went straight back to town [where a] public metting [meeting] [was] going on at the time. He entered the metting and plead[ed] for protection. The Bishop promised him protection upon the condition that he remaind and behaved himself.<sup>217</sup>

I have not the lest doubt but that you have heard of this case. Nither do I doubt but that it has had the appropriate coloring to sute [suit] the tastes of honnest and [p. 4] faithful but to[o] credulous Saints at home [i.e., in Scotland] put upon it by some faithfull Elder

<sup>214</sup>George A. Hicks, also residing in Spanish Fork, wrote, "This [Reformation] preaching soon began to have an effect throughout the country and many were the victims that fell by the hand of the destroyer. . . . My wife and myself both saw the blood of the Parishes at Springville two days after the murder. Those were truly perilous times such as only fanatic[s] know how to bring on a country." "History of George Armstrong Hicks," chap. 10.

<sup>215</sup>There were actually two men, "Duff" Potter and Abraham Durfee, who betrayed them, but to call them Danites is probably inaccurate.

<sup>216</sup>Abraham Durfee twice mentioned that the Parrishes had a bridle with them, but neither it nor a lariat was found with the corpses. "Property Found on the Bodies," Hosea Stout, Miscellaneous Papers, Utah State Historical Society.

<sup>217</sup>Orrin, the younger son, tells a different story. He "ran to his uncle's house; some ten or twelve men were standing in the street to the left. Witness [Orrin] got in so quick they could not catch him." A guard was set over the house that night and the next day he was taken before Justice of the Peace John M. Stewart and examined in a court of inquiry. "Testimony of Orrin E. Parrish," in Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*, 47.

from Zion.<sup>218</sup> But I have only to say I have given you a simple unvarnished statement of the facts as they occurred and would merely add that they were men of good moral character, had committed no crime and were in debt to no body.<sup>219</sup>

This act occurred during the reformation excitement, and it was expected that the Celestial laws were going to be put in force right straight, and as they had already declared their independence from the United States,<sup>220</sup> they had full faith that the Lord would fight their battles and sustain them as an independent Kingdom to the dismay and overthrow of all their enemies, even the Prophet himself declaring that with Ten men of the right stripe he could defy all the armies of the U.S.<sup>221</sup> But the enemies from within were more to be feared, hence the necessity of cleansing

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<sup>218</sup>Probably reflecting the standard Church explanation of the time, B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 4:176–77, 176 note 26, briefly described the Parrish murders, placed the blame squarely on the individuals who committed these and other “deeds of blood perpetrated in those troubled, and unsettled years of Utah’s history,” and unequivocally absolved the Church of any responsibility. He explained these crimes as the outgrowth of times “when men’s worst passions were highly wrought upon by memories of past injustice, and by threatening portents of oppression yet to come.”

<sup>219</sup>As discussed above, McAuslan may have been mistaken about a possible debt.

<sup>220</sup>On August 31, 1856 Brigham Young declared, “We are bound to become a sovereign State in the Union, or an independent nation by ourselves,” *Journal of Discourses* 4:40. On September 6, 1857, when the U.S. Army was on its way to Utah, he “declared that the thread [sic] was cut between us and the U. S. and that the Almighty recognized us as a free and independent people and that no officer appointed by the government should come and rule over us from this time forth.” Quoted in Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier*, 2:636. Charles Derry, referring to a sermon given by Heber C. Kimball on the same date, wrote, “They [the church leaders] talked very loudly about ‘Buck and Bright’ being no longer yoked up together. ‘Buck’ represented the Government under Buchanan, and ‘Bright,’ Utah under the rule of Brigham.” Derry, *Autobiography*, 43; *Journal of Discourses* 5:217.

<sup>221</sup>Brigham Young made this declaration three times in the fall of 1857 when the army was on its way to Utah. “Our enemies will not be able to come within a hundred miles of us. I know that ten men, such as I could

the inside of the Platter first.<sup>222</sup>

As it is not attall according to my feelings to write on this subject and [I] would not have troubled you now with this expos[t]ulation on Mormonism had you not, allong with others, requested me to write you on this subject. I have a few more remarks to make and then I shall close for the present.

A few words about polligmy or selestial marrage. There is no such a thing as revelation from the Lord required in order to get more wifes. Previous to the Mormon rebellion, there was generall teaching to all to go ahead and get more wifes as they could \_\_\_ [illegible word] to receive a Selestiall Salvation with it.<sup>223</sup> That coupled allong with conciration [consecration] of all your property to the Lord—that is Brigham, the only Lord they my [may] ever expect to see,—that down there Selestial Salvation is about sure, or as I would speek it, they are bound hand and foot, and must remain slaves to Lord Brigham during there natural lives. You must see at once that a man after he has got two or three wifes and they have children by him, natural affection, even if he should lose faith in Mormonism, binds him to his chil-

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name and select, could stop them before they got to Laramie. . . . I count five such men equal to twenty-five thousand, and believe that two of them could put ten thousand to flight." October 8, 1857, *Journal of Discourses* 5:339. See also statements on October 25, 1857, *ibid.*, 5:353; November 15, 1857, *ibid.*, 6:41.

<sup>222</sup>This scriptural metaphor (Matt. 23:25; Alma 60:23–24) was applied frequently to eliminating apostates during the Reformation. For example, on March 2, 1856, Jedediah Grant preached, "I not only wish but pray, in the name of Israel's God, that the time was come in which to unsheath the sword, like Moroni of old, and to cleanse the inside of the platter, and we would . . . walk into you and completely use up every curse who will not do right." *Journal of Discourses* 3:236; see also "Discourse," *Deseret News*, November 12, 1856, 284; and Heber C. Kimball's statements, *Journal of Discourses* 4:140, 6:35.

<sup>223</sup>Church leaders urgently promoted polygamy during the Reformation. Nelson Wheeler Whipple, also a resident of the Nineteenth Ward during the Reformation, noted: "Among other teaching and instructions the plurality of wifes was strongly urged and a great number of the men took more wifes. Some two, three, four and as high as eight." "The History of Nelson Wheeler Whipple," typescript, Mormon File, Huntington Library, 56; see also Daniel H. Wells, March 1, 1857, *Journal of Discourses* 4:254.

dren, and as they [the] saying amongst them is, "if he should apostatize his property wont."<sup>224</sup> Thus you see the Trap is well planed and it's hard to get out of, and the reason of them being so anxious to get them into it, before the expected fight with *Uncle Sam* [in the Utah War], for if a man will fight for anything it will be for his wives and children coupled with a fanicial [fanatical?] religion. As is to be expected, the women live very unhappy lives with but few exceptions.

The present prospect for Joseph Smiths prophesy in regard to South Caralena being fullfilled is at present exciting much interest at Salt Lake, with the Saints. I learn this from the pappers. (Such a prophesy even though it should come to pass) looses much of its weight when the fact is known that S.C. has possessed the elliments of disunion as far back as the 1800 and has manifested itself less or more ever scince.<sup>225</sup> [Letter draft ends here.]

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Although he did not mention wanting to improve his life economically, Peter McAuslan closely matched the others in this study in the causes they gave for losing their faith: His expectations of "Zion" were disappointed, he thought the demands of obedience conflicted with his God-given faculties for reason and self-development, he saw polygamy as a way to keep the people chained to Mormonism, he no longer believed that Brigham Young was inspired by God but rather was interested in living well at the expense of the members, and he saw plenty of reason to fear those in authority if one turned against Mormonism. McAuslan, however, was the only one of the seven living in Utah County and was thus particularly affected by the Parrish-Pot-

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<sup>224</sup>Compare with Hyde, *Mormonism*, 38, on consecration, who quoted Brigham Young as saying, "If you tie up the calf the cow will stay" and Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints*, 502 note.

<sup>225</sup>McAuslan was referring to Joseph Smith's prediction of a war between the North and the South that would begin in South Carolina and in which all nations on earth would be involved (D&C 87). By this means, Mormons of the time believed, the United States would be punished for acting against Mormonism. Paul Peterson, "The Mormon Reformation of 1856-1857," 80, commented, "When the Civil War failed to lead to the consummation of all things, a re-reading of historical processes was made necessary."

ter murders.<sup>226</sup> All the others lived in Salt Lake City or the northern settlements.

### EPILOGUE

Robert Salmon was not dissuaded by McAuslan's letter. He came to Utah six years later with his wife and ten children on the *John Bright* and settled in Coalville, Summit County, Utah. In 1877, when Summit Stake was organized, he was appointed bishop and continued in that capacity until 1889. He is listed as county clerk in the 1880 U.S. Census. He died in 1891 at age seventy-eight.<sup>227</sup>

For the seven who left, their lives took divergent paths, though a number of them continued to express their religious feelings.

Charles Derry settled in the Midwest, joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1861, served a mission

<sup>226</sup>Another similarly affected, but not included in our group, was a young Welsh man, John Davies, who wrote to his brother: "I guess you are anxious to know the reason why I left Salt Lake. . . . If he [i.e., a person] don't agree to these things [tithing, polygamy], he had better quit: but by doing so he is in danger of losing his life every minute, for they would rather kill him than let him be the means of letting the world know how things are in their midst. Many have been shot down in trying to escape." He then says he "saw three persons killed merely because they intended to escape," and describes the Parrish-Potter murders. It seems unlikely that he was, in fact, an eye-witness, since his account contains several inaccuracies: Springfield instead of Springville, Sunday morning instead of Sunday night, "Poster" instead of "Potter" (although this could be a typesetter's error), and that all three were shot (only two were). However, he has the correct day, the correct number of victims (three), and that the father's throat was cut. And certainly, his main point is clear: These murders, combined with his belief that "many" had similarly died, were his main motivation for leaving Utah. "The Mormons: A Curious Personal Narrative of an Escaped Mormon," *New York Times*, September 28, 1857, 2. According to Don Carlos Johnson, *A Brief History of Springville*, 48-49, the Parrish murders led "many" to leave Springville and Utah between the summer of 1857 and that of 1859; he gives the names of eight families who were among them.

<sup>227</sup>*Mormon Immigration Index*, CD-ROM, 2000; Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company, 1941), 151; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1880, Coalville, Summit County, Utah, National Archives MF #T9-1338, p. 13A.

in England, and lived wherever he was called, but mostly in the Council Bluffs, Iowa, area. He served as an apostle for five years, as president of the high priests' quorum for twenty-six years, and was ordained a patriarch. He wrote more than ninety articles for the *Saints' Herald* before his death in 1921, age ninety-five.<sup>228</sup>

Stephen Forsdick left Utah at age twenty-four. The 1880 U.S. Census lists him as a farmer in Rose Creek, Republic County, Kansas, with his wife and six children. He died in 1927 at age ninety-two.<sup>229</sup>

Frederick Gardiner spent the Civil War years in New Orleans, eventually serving in the Union Army as a hospital steward. He then went to England on the promise of a job, but when it did not materialize, he returned to New Orleans, then went to Salt Lake City to be near his parents and siblings. Brigham Young called him to go to St. George, but he declined, which made his break with the Church final. He practiced as a doctor in Salt Lake City, though he was never formally trained or licensed. Gardiner died in 1903 in Salt Lake City at age sixty-eight.<sup>230</sup>

John Hyde Jr. lectured against Mormonism in California and published *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* in New York in the summer of 1857. The previous January he was excommunicated publicly in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle and "delivered over to Satan to be buffeted in the flesh."<sup>231</sup> From New York, he returned to England in 1858, leaving his wife in Utah. In 1860 she became the plural wife of Joseph Woodmansee, a Salt Lake merchant. Apparently afraid for his life, he never returned to Utah. He led a respectable life in England, becoming a Swendenborgian minister in Derbyshire, wrote several books and pamphlets, and died in 1876 at age forty-three.<sup>232</sup>

Frederick Loba settled sequentially in Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois, where he died of pneumonia in 1864 on his farm, age fifty-four.

<sup>228</sup>Derry, *Autobiography*, xi, 62, 525.

<sup>229</sup>Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail to Zion," 33 note; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1880, Rose Creek, Republic County, Kansas, National Archives MF #T9-0394, p. 44A.

<sup>230</sup>Gardiner, *A Mormon Rebel*, xvi, 115-55.

<sup>231</sup>*Journal of Discourses* 4:165.

<sup>232</sup>Jorgensen, "John Hyde, Jr.," 129-36. An interesting account of Hyde's anti-Mormon campaign in California is given in Ekins, *Defending Zion*, 117-39.

His son Jean Frederick became a Congregational minister; another son, Victor Eugene, also became a minister.<sup>233</sup>

Peter McAuslan, his wife, and their two children settled north of Yuba City in the Sacramento Valley, California, where he became a wheat and fruit grower. Six more children were born to them. For the rest of his life he was actively interested in both Spiritualism and socialism. He lived to be nearly eighty-five, dying in 1908.<sup>234</sup> McAuslan shared five characteristics with the more illustrious Godbeites who rebelled against the Church ten years later: he was British, enjoyed debate, dissented from the Church, was skeptical of Brigham Young, and became a Spiritualist.<sup>235</sup>

Thomas Poulter settled first in Marysville, California, then the third largest city in California after San Francisco and Sacramento, where he worked as a watchman. After five years, he was lured to the Comstock Lode in Virginia City, Nevada, but instead settled his family in Carson City where he worked successively for the Overland Mail Company and the mint, then managed a bar and hotel. After his wife died, he went back to England, but unhappy there, he returned to California. He eventually moved back to Utah to be with his widowed sister-in-law in Ogden and worked at Farr's mill. As his four children were all married in the Endowment House in 1882, it appears that he and his children were reinstated as Church members. Poulter died in 1892 at age seventy-five.<sup>236</sup>

### FINAL QUESTIONS

In evaluating these accounts of disaffection and departure, the most crucial question is credibility. Are these accounts believable? Are they reliable witnesses? On the whole, the answer is yes. The most

<sup>233</sup>Loba, "Statement," 4; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1860, Central Township, Jefferson County, Missouri (name written as "Lobar"), National Archives MF #M653-626, p. 540; Jean Frederick Loba, *Reminiscences*, 34-39, 49-52; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1880, Lorenzo, Brown County, Minnesota, National Archives MF #T9-0616, p. 79c.

<sup>234</sup>"Sutter Pioneer Goes to His Reward," *Daily Appeal* [Marysville, California], December 22, 1908, 5; "Death of Peter McAuslan," *Sutter County Farmer*, December 25, 1908, 6, 7.

<sup>235</sup>Walker, *Wayward Saints*.

<sup>236</sup>Poulter, "Life," 95-165; death date from Family Group Record, retrieved on January 12, 2003, from [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).

suspect of exaggeration is Frederick Loba and the gripping story of his escape. Although it is not possible to verify his account completely, Loba's son, Jean Frederick, who wrote his memoirs at age fifty-six when he was an ordained Congregational minister, confirmed his side of Loba's account: that when he was eleven, his father and step-mother had fled through the mountains, while the eight children, of whom he was the oldest, his step-brother described as a "young man," and his frail step-grandmother, all followed a week later by wagon but were accosted by Church men on horseback who took their best yoke of oxen and a good part of their provisions. He told of the happy sight of his father on the far side of the river at Fort Laramie waving a red silk handkerchief as they approached. "Now we knew they were safe. We had . . . been informed that they were pursued by the Mormons as soon as their flight had been discovered, that Brigham Young had put men mounted on mules, who were to scour the canyons and climb every mountain possible and bring them back, dead or alive."<sup>237</sup> Jean Frederick wrote in 1899, three years after Utah had achieved statehood, more than twenty years after Brigham Young's death, and after the most intense period of prosecution for polygamy during the 1880s had passed. Although Mormons had not yet achieved integration into the American mainstream, there seems to have been no particular reason for Rev. Loba to have sensationalized his account and, in fact, it contains neither harsh accusations nor sweeping generalizations.

What kind of people were these seven? Brigham Young called them "nasty apostates."<sup>238</sup> Hosea Stout quoted scripture against them: "The fire of the reformation is burning many out who flee from the territory afraid for their lives," he wrote in 1857. "This is scriptural. 'The wicked flee when no man pursue,' and so with an apostate Mormon he always believes his life in danger and flees accordingly."<sup>239</sup>

There is no doubt that these seven were afraid. But were they wicked? From what one can tell, they appear to have been sincere and principled individuals. Two of them (Hyde and Derry) plus two sons of a third (Loba) became ministers in their new churches. Two others (Poulter and Gardener) returned to live in Utah near their

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<sup>237</sup>Jean Frederick Loba, *Reminiscences*, 16–18.

<sup>238</sup>Young, *Journal of Discourses* 1:83.

<sup>239</sup>Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier*, 2:625; see Proverbs 28:1.



families. One rejoined the Church; the other worked as a doctor. A sixth (McAuslan) became a hard-working farmer who raised a large family in California. The seventh (Forsdick) also became a farmer, but less is known about him. In short, they all appear to have lived stable and respectable lives. But before he settled down in England, John Hyde Jr. wrote an anti-Mormon book which along with his lectures contributed to the furor during the Utah War. But in spite of his bitterness, he expressed sadness that the religion so fervently held in his youth had come to disappoint him to the extent he could no longer in conscience believe in it and felt he must caution others. The stereotype of "wicked apostates," even for Hyde, fails to satisfy when one begins to understand each one's particular experiences and reasons.

A more apt assessment may be that written by the niece of William Parrish, murdered in Springville in 1857. She said that the people who left "were mostly a good people, honest, and sincere in their religion, until, they saw the wickedness that was being practiced. Many knew nothing of polygamy, until they came there and saw it practiced, and when they were there, there was no way for them to get away. They were too poor . . . and they must obey the laws of the Church, and do as they were told and ask no questions."<sup>240</sup>

Thomas Poulter, having lived many years among both Mormons and non-Mormons, ended his memoir with a balanced appraisal: "I have been asked 'Are the Mormon men better than those that are not Mormons?' As a proof you can only prove this answer by their works. As a clue to this I have seen some Mormons very good, yea very good, while others have made their religion to be the means of doing every kind of meanness."<sup>241</sup>

Were the individuals of this group so influenced by their expectations of Zion that they were bound to be disappointed? For two hundred years, America had been viewed as rich in opportunities and a place for new beginnings. In the half century preceding the period of Mormon emigration from Europe, ideas of romanticism blended with those of social revolution and millenarianism, and the working classes, from which the Mormon emigrants were drawn, longed to turn out the old and corrupt to welcome in a

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<sup>240</sup>Parrish Keir, *Memoir*. Keir moved with her family to San Bernardino soon after the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

<sup>241</sup>Poulter, "Life," 165.

new age of righteousness and plenty. The American missionaries thus found it easy to foster radiant expectations and conjure up glowing images of Utah.<sup>242</sup> Eliza R. Snow had written a hymn with sage advice:

Think not when you gather to Zion,  
Your troubles and trials are through . . . ,  
Think not when you gather to Zion,  
That all will be holy and pure.<sup>243</sup>

Despite this wise counsel, converts in Great Britain had only to pick up almost any issue of the *Millennial Star* to find such countervailing poetry about Utah as:

They've sought out for themselves a peaceful home, . . .  
Where wisdom, knowledge, and the love of God,  
Flow down upon them with . . . burning power.<sup>244</sup>

In many articles and poems—and thus in the minds of the emigrants themselves—the Zion to which the converts were gathering merged with the Zion they expected under Christ's rule. Once in Utah these hopes were thus easily dashed, particularly in the late 1850s when the newcomers faced exceptionally trying and unsettled times: a series of natural disasters that led to famine, the dreaded approach of the U.S. army, and the disruption caused by the move south. But what seems to have turned the individuals studied here most against Mormonism were the demands of obedience, the tenet and practice of polygamy, the excesses of the Reformation, the perceived failure of Brigham Young and other Church leaders to set and live up to a high moral standard, and the insidious atmosphere of fear. It is not surprising that some took the road out of Zion.

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<sup>242</sup>For examples of how the Mormon missionaries in Great Britain described Utah, see Polly Aird, "Why Did the Scots Convert?" *Journal of Mormon History* 26 (Spring 2000): 110–12.

<sup>243</sup>I am indebted to Lynn and Pamela Carson, Salt Lake City, for the text of Snow's hymn.

<sup>244</sup>John Jaques, "Who Can Measure Arms with God?" *Millennial Star* 15 (January 3, 1853): 31–32.