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MORMON

MASSACRE

Joseph M. Rinaldo

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EXECUTIVE ORDER – 05.13.1858.A

By the order of the office of the President of the United States of America, Attorney General Jeremiah Black is hereby instructed and authorized to investigate the recent occurrences at Mountain Meadows in Utah Territory from September seventh in the year of our Lord, eighteen hundred fifty-seven to September eleventh of said year, by any means he chooses provided that no laws of the United States of America be broken by Attorney General Jeremiah Black or by any of his assigns or agents. This investigation shall proceed forthwith. Attorney General Jeremiah Black is hereby further instructed to provide the office of the President of the United States with a report of the facts and recommendations as to how the federal government should handle the matter, if indeed this incident did occur. Into the most trusted hands of the Attorney General Jeremiah Black we give this matter praying his discretion and wisdom reveal the truth in an expeditious manner.

James Buchanan

President James Buchanan

ATTORNEY GENERAL REPORT IN COMPLETION OF DEMANDS SET FORTH IN EXECUTIVE ORDER – 05.13.1858.A

APPROVED BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JEREMIAH BLACK *JB*

Authorization

On March 13, 1858, President James Buchanan authorized a covert investigation into the occurrences at Mountain Meadows in the Utah Territory from September 7th to September 11th of 1857.

Investigative Method

Under President Buchanan's authority as granted to me by Executive Order 05.13.1858.A, I, Jeremiah S. Black, Attorney General, United States of America, dispatched two men to Utah Territory. One traveled through the territory meeting the inhabitants under the guise of a rifle salesman; the other acted as a nail and tool salesman. Both men had reason to go from town to town in the southern Utah Territory and meet numerous people without arousing suspicion. The men acted independently of one another.

Witness Confidentiality

Given the covert nature of this investigation, all sources will remain undisclosed pending the decision regarding the feasibility of federal prosecution in this matter. Most of the sources provided information unknowingly to federal agents. Whether the source knew the true identity of the information's recipient or not, if the information becomes public knowledge, both federal agents assure me that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would almost certainly silence potential witnesses by threat, intimidation, or murder. The facts detailed by some sources

would most likely indicate who provided the information, as only a very small, select group of men know the truth of the events at Mountain Meadows.

Facts

1. On the recommendation of local inhabitants the Fancher-Baker wagon train of Arkansas emigrants camped at Mountain Meadows in the southern corner of Utah Territory.
2. On September the 7th, 1857, the wagon train fell under attack. On September the 11th, 1857, the attack ceased. None of the members of the Fancher-Baker party survived with the exception of an indeterminate number of children all under eight years of age.
3. Both agents traveled through Mountain Meadows in accordance with my orders. They found a pile of bodies and many more lying about the area. The remains had been scattered, consumed, and torn to pieces due to the activities of scavenging animals.
4. The vast majority of the deceased clearly died from bullet wounds to their heads, which tells us that the assassins stood close to the victims. The circumstances in this event would be wholly unique and unprecedented for an Indian attack, based upon my conversation with Acting Commissioner Charles E. Mix of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in particular respect to the Paiute tribes' passivity and acceptance of white settlers.
5. My agents counted the mostly intact skulls, which totaled fifty. From what they saw of partial skulls scattered about the Meadow, one agent suggested the total amounted to a hundred or so dead. The other agent guaranteed the number to be well over a hundred victims.

Conflicting Statements

1. According to many inhabitants, Indians attacked the emigrants. The federal agents, both intimately familiar with Indians, their weapons, and their techniques, found this conclusion contrary to the evidence seen at Mountain Meadows.
2. Brigham Young ordered the attacks. Both agents have extensive experience interviewing witnesses and have my utmost trust and confidence. Both assure me that the three, separate and unrelated, sources making this claim believed the assertion to be true. Whether Brigham Young ordered the attacks or not, these people, all of whom are Mormon, believe that he did. The majority of the inhabitants in the area surrounding Mountain Meadows refused to discuss the affair. A minority of locals claimed Paiute Indians perpetrated the assault. However, both federal agents found the manner and conviction of these accusations untrustworthy. Ultimately, no evidence came to light verifying the accusation of Brigham Young directing the attack.
3. Danites, a dedicated Mormon militia intensely loyal to Brigham Young and the LDS, attacked and killed the emigrants. The weapons used on the emigrants support this theory, but no source would openly state the name of a single Mormon included in said attack for fear of reprisal. Several men, in a drunken state, claimed to have participated in the killings at Brigham Young's direction; all of them wept during the retelling. The agents found the detailed descriptions from these inebriated men to be the most accurate and forthright accounting of the event. The sources mentioned here and those in

paragraph two immediately above are not the same persons, nor do the agents believe the sources from paragraphs two and three coordinated or rehearsed their stories. Thus, one must conclude truth when multiple unrelated witnesses recite similar accounts.

Conclusion

This matter must be thoroughly pursued. With the number and willingness of the force Brigham Young might call forth to oppose our efforts, I respectfully advise that a strong contingent of federal troops be sent with the investigators. The investigation, as important as it is, pales in comparison to the threat of Southern secession and must wait until that situation has been resolved.

PRESENT DAY

Chapter One

Jeremiah Cameron stood before his American History 150 class at Davidson State University in Nashville, Tennessee, to give his Research Presentation. Privately he hoped at least one Mormon sat in the audience of thirty-five students, most of whom he knew only by sight.

In hopes of getting the presentation off to an emotional start, he spoke briefly before beginning the PowerPoint slide show. “Mormons killed my great-great-great-great-grandparents as they traveled through Mountain Meadows, Utah, in the Fancher-Baker wagon train in 1857. Camerons made up the largest family in the party, although the leaders of the train were Fanchers and Bakers.

“The Mormons slaughtered between one hundred and one hundred fifty emigrants moving from Arkansas to California.”

The first slide illuminated the front wall of the dimmed classroom; it showed a covered wagon.

“What is believed to have been the richest wagon train to move across the western frontier to this point, stopped in a place named Mountain Meadows. The locals steered the emigrants to this particular spot for a reason. The leader of the Mormons, Brigham Young, forbade any of his followers to do business with these travelers. This order doesn’t sound that bad now for the Mormons, but at the time residents of Utah Territory depended on trading with the people moving to California for the gold rush for much of their livelihood. The Mormons looked forward to bartering with these travelers who had reached Utah after a long and arduous desert crossing. The travelers willingly paid the high prices charged by the locals for perishable items like flour and corn meal. This ban on trade hurt the Mormons, but not as much as it hurt the hungry and weary travelers in the Fancher-Baker wagon train.”

Jeremiah clicked the remote to bring up slide two of a black and white, slightly blurry, old photograph of a field covered in sagebrush and cactus in the foreground with steep hills in the distance. The next slide showed the same portion of harsh landscape from a different angle.

“As you can see from these two slides, the flat field in the center is surrounded by steep hills. These pictures of Mountain Meadows come from the Mormon Victims’ Action Committee website. They work with victims of abuse by the Mormon Church, and they preserve the history of Mormon transgressions.” Flipping back to the first shot of the field, he pointed at a corner of the picture. “This spot is where a natural spring provides water for the meadow.”

Jeremiah flipped back to the second shot of the field. “The Fancher-Baker party expected to be welcomed by Mormons happy to trade with them, as many of them had been on Alexander Fancher’s first trip through the region to establish a cattle ranch in California.”

The next slide showed a fat man with receding white hair, a bow tie, and suit in a black and white photograph.

“Like many cult leaders, Brigham Young believed that the world sought to destroy him and his followers. He saw no gray in the world; you either joined the Mormons, or you waged war against the Mormons. Although the Mormons had been persecuted in New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois before moving to Utah, they were free to worship as they pleased out west. In spite of this freedom, Brigham Young’s paranoia led him to issue orders for his followers to murder the Fancher-Baker party.”

Jeremiah tried to keep his voice level; and did a pretty good job until he began the next part.

“Upon moving to Utah, the Mormons created a militia called the Danites, named after the biblical Daniel. Later they came to be known as Avenging Angels. Whatever the name, their reputation as a bloodthirsty group grew as they beheaded their own members in *blood* atonement for real or imagined infractions. They also fought against their perceived persecutors.

“When the Fancher-Baker party came into Mormon territory, the Mormons refused to sell them the supplies the emigrants desperately needed; the Mormons refused even at the inflated prices the travelers would have willingly paid. Instead, the Mormons directed them to a grassy meadow with a freshwater spring under the pretext of offering them a safe place to rest before crossing the Sierra Mountains. As directed, the wagon train traveled as fast as they could with their cattle and possessions to Mountain Meadows.

“Once they arrived at Mountain Meadows, the caravan let the cattle they planned to sell in California graze, and the people rested.”

The next slide displayed a row of men wearing nineteenth century clothes and holding rifles. They stood along the front wall of the classroom and stared back at the classroom.

“With the people of the wagon train resting at the spot where the Mormons had instructed them to go, the Danites called in all available troops. After painting their faces with the war paint of local Paiute Indians - and I need to point out that the Indians in this area traded freely with all white men and very, very rarely attacked or got attacked - the face-painted Mormons fired on the emigrants. They fired from cowardly positions in the hills surrounding the unsuspecting California emigrants.”

The next slide showed an old man with a bow tie, suit, and stylishly long grey hair parted on the left side.

“John D. Lee commanded the Danites. To his and all the Danites’ surprise, the people in the wagon train reacted very quickly and efficiently after the first shot hit Alexander Fancher in the throat. They circled the wagons, literally and figuratively. The people of the Fancher-Baker party hailed from Arkansas where skirmishes with Indians were commonplace; gunfights were nothing new to them.

“Up to this point in the battle, the Danites had underestimated the emigrants. After four days of sniper fire and guerrilla attacks, the Danites wondered if their adversaries might hold out forever if something drastic wasn’t done.

“During one night of the siege, the people in the caravan also realized that they too needed to do something drastic. They sent a pair of men out in hopes they might be able to slip through the mountains. Everyone knew that they would have to walk for a week to the nearest

city and back, so no one expected them to bring help before the food ran out. The Mormons saw the men leave. The Danites followed them until the men went far enough to be out of hearing range and shot the two men.”

The next slide showed a white flag waving in the wind.

“John D. Lee rode into the Fancher camp carrying a white flag. He told the travelers that he had negotiated a truce with the Indians attacking them. If they agreed to follow him out, they could continue to California.

“One of the emigrants shot early in the fighting and suffering from a high fever screamed not to do it. The rest of the party disregarded his words because they only had twenty shots left, little food, and no other options.

“Once the Arkansans agreed, John D. Lee separated the men from the women and children. He further separated the wounded and the children under eight from the other two groups. The distinction for the age division comes from the Mormon belief that those age eight and under are still innocent. The wagons with the wounded and these children moved toward a pass out of the meadow first, followed a quarter mile behind by the women on foot. At the end of this diabolically organized march, the men followed about a half a mile behind the women.”

The next slide showed a man dressed as a western settler with a rifle in his hands escorting a prisoner.

“Every one of the men from the wagon train walked with an armed escort beside him. The women, children, and wounded had armed escorts, but not a one-to-one ratio like the men. After the youngest children and the wounded crested a hill and disappeared from view, a shot rang out and one of the Mormon leaders shouted something to the effect, ‘Halt! Do your duty!’ At that signal, the escorts shot the men walking with them. Other Mormon killers shot the women and the wounded. Several women were forced to strip and dance naked for their killers’ amusement. Some of the Mormons raped the women.

“Some women and children begged for their lives. They promised to be slaves, wives, and whatever else they could think to promise, but all of them were killed by bullets, bayonets, or knives. None were spared.

“All of this happened in full view of the children. The kids watched their parents die. Once the slaughter began, the Mormons disregarded the Age of Innocence Doctrine covering children eight and under, and killed children of any age they thought might make a good witness against them later. Specifically, John D. Lee decided which children might act as witnesses against them. On his orders the Danites lined up the children after killing all the adults. I can’t stress this enough - he personally picked out the children to be slaughtered.”

The next slide brought to life a beautiful church with tall spires and a white façade that impressed the class.

“This historical event relates to the Mormons of today because it shows how they will stop at nothing for wealth and power. Several of the young survivors told about seeing Mormon women wearing their mothers’ dresses after they were adopted into Mormon homes. None of these stories came to light until the Mormons returned the children to their families in Arkansas in order to avoid a war with the United States over the incident. Of course, when people are involved in something this traumatic, word leaks out. Repentant participants and Mormons on the periphery of the event told people, who told people. Word of the shocking massacre spread fast across the country.

“In August of 1999, a backhoe operator accidentally dug up a vast collection of human remains. Scientist flocked to the area to hear the bones tell their story. Before they could learn

the facts of these murders, Utah Governor Mike Leavitt halted excavations. It should come as no surprise; he is a direct descendant of one of the massacre participants.

"The Mormons were a murderous band of power-hungry killers led by a sadistic religious zealot. At his command they killed a wagon train full of people to take their gold, clothes, cattle, and everything else they traveled with. The money and possessions from these murders went directly to the Church. Brigham Young rode around Salt Lake City in a Fancher-Baker wagon from the time of the killings until his death. Interesting to note, the wagons Brigham Young kept for himself from the Fancher-Baker party were the best made at the time.

"In conclusion, the Mormons murdered well over one hundred innocent people in 1857, and they are still guilty of covering up the crime, making them every bit as culpable today as they were in 1857. Any questions?"

The class sat stunned.

After organizing her thoughts, the Professor said, "We don't have time for another presenter at this point, so let's debate the conclusion Jeremiah made. Are the Mormons as guilty today as they were at the time of massacre?"

The majority of the students argued that the Mormons of today shouldn't try to hide the facts of the massacre, but that didn't make them as guilty as the people who actually killed the people so long ago.

Jeremiah hotly defended his position. "If they want to be absolved of any responsibility, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints needs to let forensic scientists go to Mountain Meadows and analyze the remains of the victims. To give you another example of the cover-up, which I wasn't able to cover given the time constraints, a National Park worker found a lead sheet. I don't really understand what it is exactly, but it can be rolled and the writing on it preserved for a very long time. The accounts I read stated that lead sheets were commonly used at the time for important documents, but nothing described them in detail.

"This lead sheet, found in a cave near the house and ferry operated by John D. Lee, stated that he led the massacre acting on Brigham Young's orders. The instant word got out about the confession, the Mormon Church denounced it as a fraud, EVEN before it could be authenticated, which tells me they had something to hide. In an interesting aside, the Park worker grew up in Utah where Mormon history is strenuously taught in schools and he recognized John D. Lee's signature the moment he scraped the animal droppings off of it, which is what he was cleaning out of the cave in the first place."

A twenty-year-old female student in the next to last row said, "You mentioned that one man, John something, wrote that he acted on orders from Brigham Young. If you want to believe him, you believe a murderer, and I don't think he should have more credibility than the head of the Mormon Church."

Jeremiah's face turned red with anger, but he took a deep breath before responding. "Let me give you another tidbit. A note from Brigham Young, dated during the passage of the Fancher-Baker party's trip through Utah, but prior to the massacre, instructed the Mormons NOT to attack the wagon train. This is patently absurd! Why would a wagon train need to worry about Mormons attacking it? Numerous wagon trains used the same trail as the Fancher train. In fact, as I said during the presentation, wagon trains were a welcomed sight. The Mormons typically traded their flour and corn meal for gold coins or cattle. Why did he issue a statement not to attack them? It also is important to note that none of the outlying Mormon communities ever produced a witness to say they saw this note before the Fancher party passed by."

The bell rang.

Isaiah Cokeland, a slightly pudgy, short, white nineteen year-old with sandy blond hair, walked up the step to the nice house on the outskirts of Nashville. "Don't be nervous," Sally Dinton told him.

"I should put my faith in Jesus; I know I should," he replied, trying to convince himself and struggling to keep his fidgeting at a minimum.

"I'll do the talking at this first house - since this is your first missionary assignment."

Sally had turned out to be nothing like Isaiah expected. Having never met a black woman before - and only two black men, he didn't know what to expect when the Missionary Director paired them together. So far, he couldn't have asked for a nicer, kinder partner. Isaiah thought her very dark-skinned face seemed to glisten in the morning sun. The Mormon belief that darker skin made a person more likely to be close to Satan prevented him from allowing himself to find her attractive.

She knocked on the front door; Isaiah nervously waited.

A man in camouflage pants, no shirt, and a beer belly that drooped over his pants seemingly to his knees answered the door.

"Good afternoon, sir," Sally said in her disarming voice. "We are from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We wanted to speak to y--"

The man shut the door.

The missionaries walked back to the sidewalk.

"That was easy enough," Isaiah noted with a smile. "No reason to be nervous about that."

"Most aren't quite that rude, but we usually run into the same response," Sally admitted. "Keep your spirits up; some door you knock on will be answered by someone who wants to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and you'll be there to help them find the way."

Knowing that he had to take the lead sooner or later, Isaiah stated, "I'll knock on the next door."

The elderly woman at the next house proved to be only slightly more polite than beer-belly man.

Back on the sidewalk Isaiah asked, "Is it always this hard to get people to talk?"

"Usually, yes," Sally informed him. "But, on my mission to the Ukraine, people welcomed us with open arms."

"That was your first assignment?"

"Yeah, I requested it. I wanted something completely different from what I was used to."

Isaiah laughed. "I assume that you succeeded?"

"I did. It was so interesting."

At the next door no one answered. For two hours the pair made their way through the subdivision without finding anyone interested in being saved from a life of sin and eternal damnation.

Over dinner at the mission house willed to the LDS by a devout childless couple, they learned that the three other pairs of missionaries had failed to generate any more interest than they did. "We can only try our best and leave the results to Jesus," Thomas Bishop observed. His encouraging words meant a great deal to the less experienced missionaries. At twenty-five, Thomas assumed the position of leader and parent of the slightly younger but grossly less experienced group.

"How many Gentiles have you converted?" Sally inquired of Thomas.

“Several dozen, but I’ve been to several third world countries. People are more receptive in the poorer countries, as you well know from your first assignment in the Ukraine. They understand that God put us here on Earth for something more. These lives on Earth are temporary, and people in worse situations are more willing to look for something deeper out of this life... and the next one.”

After dinner the group watched television until Thomas led them in a before-bed prayer session.

“Prophet Michael, do you have anything you wish to discuss before we go to the items on the agenda?” Secretary Solomon Hyden asked after the opening prayer.

The Prophet looked from man to man. His seat at the head of the long oak table gave him a commanding view of each apostle. The oak table accentuated the dignified aura of the meeting room in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in Salt Lake City where the portraits of all the former Latter-day Saints leaders hung on the walls. The thick walls prevented any noise from entering the chamber even though they sat in the center of a large, modern city.

The length of the Prophet’s silence indicated the importance of the words to come; however, this silence seemed to go on forever.

“As members of the Council of Twelve, you understand the confidence I place in you. You must not share this information I am about to impart to you. Once you leave here, I have no choice but to trust you completely.” He let the tension build. “I must inform you; we have a new threat.”

For his most trusted followers, the silence following that statement made them anxious. Their leader rarely hesitated before the faithful. The charismatic leader usually spoke quickly, with confidence, with insight, and with sincerity that inspired.

“A secret force is amassing against us. Word has come to me about a powerful enemy aligned against us. To respond to this new threat, we have to turn to our past. Prophet Joseph Smith created the Danites, our secret militia, and I am asking you to resurrect them. This secret force of only the most devout Mormons will be our protectors. In the past, we have had to fight off persecutors who attacked us with clubs and guns, but a new threat is coming.” Prophet Michael paused to let his words sink in.

The Council of Twelve members stared at their leader, unsure how to respond.

“Persecutors will use any means possible to conquer us. You know we are considered outsiders, objects of ridicule by everyone. We must be ever vigilant. Each of us and all the Danites we recruit must discover our enemies and defend our faith against the vicious attacks that will be coming. As our persecutors grow in strength and numbers, we might find some of our own questioning their faith and their loyalty to the Church. Any Mormon that doubts the one true path to heaven must atone for their lack of faith.”

The Mormon leader said "atone" without any emphasis, but that word struck deeply into the soul of all those present. Atonement meant many things to the listeners. Mormon history and culture defined atoning several different ways from apologizing to beheading.

“How you choose who is worthy of Danite status is up to you. I command all of you to recruit twelve Danites to discover the people betraying our faith. The apostates must be dealt with by the ‘blood atonement’ invoked by the great seer, leader and most faithful servant of the Prophets Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. They protected our faith from persecutors who would stop at nothing, and we must now show that same determination and commitment to Jesus

Christ, our Lord and Savior. We are on the verge of another Mormon War; we teeter on the same ledge of war Brigham sat on.”

The Council of Twelve raptly listened, committing every word to memory. The chosen voice for Jesus Christ on Earth told them they verged on a war in order to keep their faith secure, and they believed him without question.

“Have twelve names in mind for next month. I will review each of the names with you to be sure they meet with my approval. We cannot have any rotten eggs in this batch. They need to be fully focused and trustworthy in our cause. Don’t ask them into Danite status before we convene next month. Go to the people you are considering and feel them out, but be subtle. See where they stand. Find out what they think about my leadership of the Mormon people; are they loyal to me? Under no circumstances are you to tell anyone what we are doing. No one, no matter how loyal, not your most trusted son, not your most faithful wife, not anyone. Are we clear?”

Everyone replied with a reverent, “Yes, Prophet Michael.”

“Two people in this room will be selected to train the Danites. All of you should pray and ask God if you should be one of those people.”

“Yes, Prophet Michael.”

“Go forth and do the Lord’s work,” he commanded them. The leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints then rose and exited via a door directly behind his seat at the head of the table. The door appeared to be part of the wall until it opened.

The Council of Twelve silently filed out of the meeting room knowing they would not speak of the Prophet’s words until asked to review their list of twelve names.

“Dude, you’re totally on crack for giving that report,” a laughing Nathan Olsen replied when he heard about Jeremiah’s presentation.

“Everything I said in front of my class was true,” an irritated Jeremiah informed his roommate and best friend.

“Man, you gotta calm down,” a still chuckling Nathan insisted, getting into the refrigerator.

“Nate, Mormons are evil little mutherfuckers. I’m on a mission to tell the world, the same as they go on their missions to spread their filth.”

“We’re totally out of beer.” Nate defied the stereotype of an avid beer drinker. His ultra-thin body held more beer than most men twice his size.

“That’s ‘cause you drink all of it right after you buy it.”

“Tell me again why you try to pick fights with Mormons?” Nate asked, popping the top on a can of Sprite.

“I’m not trying to pick a fight.”

The two roomies stared at one another for a beat, before cracking smiles.

“Ok, I might not mind if a mutherfucking Mormon wanted to fight,” Jeremiah admitted. While thicker than his very thin friend, Jeremiah would never be mistaken for a heavy-weight fighter. A hair under six feet tall and weighing one hundred seventy-five pounds with light brown hair and brown eyes, he appeared average in every respect physically. “It was a great report, because everything I said was true. The prof told me before I left that I got an A. The truth needs to be told that Mormons killed people in the eighteen hundreds, and I saw a Sixty Minutes episode where this Mormon married a girl who was nine! Dude, that’s fucked up.”

“That is fucked up,” Nate agreed, “but I don’t understand why you think you have to be the messenger.”

“Somebody has to be, and I’m inspired.”

“I think you’ve decided to be the messenger because you hate religions and you’re looking for a fight.”

“Most religions are bad, and have you noticed what preachers wear? Those guys always dress nicer than anybody but mafia dons.”

Nate rolled his eyes in anticipation of what would inevitably follow.

“Dude, the perfect example is that church right here in Nashville! Hellfire. At the Assembly of Christ Church on Old Hickory Boulevard, they have a preacher that’s been convicted of murder!”

“That’s a Baptist church. They don’t care about him murdering people as long as he doesn’t drink.”

“Or dance,” Jeremiah added in a rare moment of levity for him during a religious tirade.

“Jer, my boy, chill out. That preacher didn’t kill anyone we know,” Nate offered in hopes of causing his friend to fly off the handle again.

“That’s NOT THE POINT! He killed somebody! Now, he collects money from those dumbasses attending his church. Have you seen him interviewed on the news? He dresses ten times nicer than I do. You can’t tell me you honestly believe he’s using that money to help anybody ‘cept himself.”

“You’re going to strain an artery or something and for no reason. Everybody dresses nicer than you do. Listen, those people give him their money. They made the money, and they want to give it away. It’s none of your business.” Nate egged on his hotheaded friend.

“True, but how stupid are these people?”

Nate burst out laughing. “I have no idea. They’re fucked in the head, but that doesn’t make them your problem.”

“You’re right about that. My problem is those fucking Mormons.”

“That hatred you have for them, it’s- it’s uhm, it’s unnatural.” With raised eyebrows reminiscent of a disapproving mother and the tone to match, Nate inquired, “Are you ready to share why you hate them so bad?”

“Not yet, but I would think that their murdering ways would be enough reason to hate them.”

“I’m going to go get some beer. Wanna go?”

Thomas Bishop called Salt Lake City for his daily check-in. “Secretary Hyden, what an honor to speak to you.”

“Oh, please, I’m a simple man like you. Today I asked Autumn to put your call through, for I wanted to speak with you personally.”

Thomas anxiously waited for the reason for this special treatment.

“You’ve led several missionaries, and those you led speak well of you. As a matter of fact, those you lead often go on to lead missionaries of their own. And, of course, your expeditions bring in a better than average number of converts, which never goes unnoticed. That is quite an accomplishment.”

“Thank you, Secretary Hyden,” Thomas replied, breaking out in a nervous sweat.

“What I’m about to say must be kept in the strictest of confidences.”

“Y- yes, sir,” a halting Thomas responded.

“We might have a new position opening. I think it’s something you might be interested in, given your devotion to the Mormon faith.”

“Secretary Hyden, if you feel that I am worthy of consideration, I’m honored.”

“Hold on, Thomas, let’s make sure this is something you might want to do before you are honored. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints *might* - and I mean *might* in the sense that we are in the very early planning stages - *might* begin sending missionaries to places that have been hostile to us or missionaries from other faiths in the past. Are you still interested?”

“Yessir! Secretary Hyden, if you feel I’m worthy to represent the Mormon faith to Gentiles in that situation, I’m willing to try. God will protect me.” The excitement in Thomas’s voice leaped through the phone.

“Your faith is impressive, Thomas. We are grateful to have you in the Mormon Church.”

Jeremiah answered his cell phone as he waited at a light in Goodlettsville. “Hello.”

“What’s going on this morning, young man?”

“Hey Dad, not much, I’m about to turn into Rivergate Mall.”

“Don’t turn into the mall. Stay in the parking lot.”

“Ha, ha.” Knowing what his father really wanted to hear about, Jeremiah went on. “I gave that report yesterday.”

“How was it received?”

“I got an A. You were wrong though; no one challenged me about the facts of the murders. The only thing that got anyone fired up was my saying the Mormons are as guilty today as they were back in 1857.”

“You obviously didn’t have any of those jackass Latter-day Saints in your class.”

“I don’t think I did either. You’d have been proud. I tried my best to really piss’em off; too bad none were in there.”

“Jeremiah, you make your old man proud all right. Did you get the chance to call Brigham Young a fat-ass?”

“No, but I did keep looking for a way to work that in.”

“How do you like the new job?” His father changed the subject.

“Selling furniture is working out pretty well. I’m good at it, which surprises me.”

“Jeremiah, have some faith in yourself. People like you; they trust you. I’ll tell you something, if you learn to be a good salesman, you’ll always have a job. That I can promise you.”

“Good to hear, but I don’t think selling furniture for two weeks makes me qualified to sell anything else.”

“Fair enough,” his father conceded. “All I’m saying is learn what you can because it’ll help you later in life. The most important thing you’re learning is how to relate to people.”

“I made it into a parking spot, so I better get in there.”

“Bye, Jeremiah. Go sell some furniture.”

That night Luke Cameron made another call after getting home at his usual five-thirty.

“Mormon Victims’ Action Committee.”

“May I speak with Greg Baker, if he’s still in?”

“He’s still here; we don’t leave until five. Let me check if he’s free,” the receptionist replied.

Luke chastised himself for always forgetting the hour difference between Nashville and Salt Lake City.

“Greg Baker.”

“Greg, it’s Luke. How goes it in the fight against tyranny and injustice?”

“Luke, great to hear from you. We might have a plural wife ready to leave her husband and testify against him and their Mormon sect.”

“Which sect is it?”

“Mormons for Christ. She got married when she was twelve. One of our female counselors worked her way into their sect and gained her trust.”

“This counselor must be brave to go undercover like that. How dangerous is this sect?”

“They’re about like the last one you helped us with. They beat their wives and children in private, but the sermons on Saturdays encourage their behavior under the veil of religious discipline. If we can get this woman out and convince her to testify, will you be willing to come out here and help prepare her for the trial?” Greg asked, knowing the answer.

“I’d be more than happy to do that, except I don’t know anything about Utah criminal law, being a defense attorney, or prepping a wit-“

“Spoken like a true lawyer,” Greg teased. “Instead of saying, ‘no,’ you drag it out like you’re paid by the word.”

“That’s me,” Luke good-naturedly replied. “Do you ever send men in undercover?”

“We haven’t in a long time, but we are considering it. Women can get in really quick because all the men in LDS sects want another wife. It’s some kind of sick status symbol for them to have as many wives as they can. The women we send in get to know the wives and build up their trust. A man would never be able to earn the trust of one of these other women. They learn very quickly to distrust men, whether they were born into a sect or if they marry into it. Plural wives spend a great deal of time together. They become accustomed to dealing with other women and keeping men outside their group. Inserting a man into a Mormon sect requires building a bridge of trust over the moat separating the men and women in order to persuade women to testify against the men. Also, sending a man in can be tough, because they wouldn’t see what was happening in another man’s home.”

“You’ve never been able to convince a man to leave and testify against the sect’s leader?” Luke asked, wanting to learn more about this organization he hoped to become a bigger part of.

“Never has a man been the first one to defect. Husbands of the women testifying against them are willing from time to time to turn on the leaders of the sects, if they think they can get a reduced sentence.”

“That sounds about right, the cowards.”

“The inserting-a-man-idea is still in the planning stages. Not to be rude, but I have to get going.”

“I’ll talk to you later.”

“Let’s make sure we keep an eye on one another. This is a rough neighborhood,” Thomas instructed the other two missionaries.

“I’m not straying far enough for either of you two to lose sight of me,” Sally chimed in.

Isaiah looked around; the rundown apartment buildings on both sides of the street, the people sitting on the steps in front of those buildings, and the assorted people wandering secretively through the alleys between the buildings, all fascinated him. Having grown up in a

very small town in southeastern Utah with 1,206 inhabitants made the west Nashville scenery a new experience for him.

Thomas approached a group of obese black women sitting on the steps in front of a building. "Good afternoon, ladies."

"Hi." How you doin'?" "Whaz up?" The women spoke politely but they eyed the newcomers with distrust.

Thomas wore a big smile and looked each of the women in the eyes. "We're passing through and wanted to speak to you about Jesus Christ. Have any of you accepted Him as your Lord and Savior?"

One woman chuckled; another woman lifted a can of Milwaukee's Best to her mouth, and a third commented, "I knew dat's what y'all wanted. Don't nobody want no religion from you here."

"We'll move on then," Thomas replied, his smile still firmly in place, "but I hope all of you have a blessed day."

In the next block, Thomas led the approach to a lone woman sitting on the steps in front of her apartment building. "Good afternoon, how are you doing today?"

"Ok," she replied cautiously eyeing him.

"We're passing through and thought you might want to hear about Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Do you mind if we take a moment of your time?"

"The Lord's forgotten me," she sharply informed him.

"He never forgets us. Sometimes He lets us stumble; sometimes He lets us work through some tough times, but He never forgets us," Thomas consoled her.

"I feel forgotten," she snapped.

"It feels that way sometimes, but we're proof He didn't forget you." Thomas nodded toward Sally and Isaiah. "I feel the power of Jesus. He sent us to you to show you that He still cares about you."

The tension flowed from the woman. Her eyes took on the misty appearance of a woman on the verge of crying.

Thomas sat down beside her. "We're here to help. I don't know how, and I don't know what we are supposed to do for you, but God wants us to help you."

The woman began to cry, but she stared at the sidewalk directly in front of her.

The veteran missionary spoke softly. "What do you need help with?"

"I need a new direction in life." The tears steadily flowed down her cheeks. "Today I lost my apartment. I be on the street. No one will take me in, cuz I've been drinkin' so much. This is the first day I've been sober in a long time. An' dat's only cuz I ain't got no money to buy liquor or coke, or anythin' to git me high."

With a sympathetic nod of the head Thomas spelled out her options. "Do you want to start this new direction here in Nashville where all the old temptations are? Or would you rather start over in a new place that will empower you to succeed? A new place that would allow you to escape your demons and find the good person inside of you that wants to get out."

"I can't go nowhere. I ain't got no money." The tears fell from her face to the hard concrete step, but her volume stayed level, and she didn't sob.

"You won't need money to go where you can become a new person. In fact," Thomas hesitated to give the appearance that he chose each word carefully, "I think having money would only get in the way of you beating back the demons that are tormenting you now. Don't let

money stop you from making the right choice. I can take you someplace to help you overcome whatever Satan has done to you.”

“This place you talkin’ ‘bout ain’t in Nashville?” She looked up at him.

Her eye contact told him that he had her attention. “The place I’m talking about is far from here, but once you’re there, it will quickly feel like home. I can promise you that the people there will want to help you. They will help you conquer your fears. They will help you rejoice in your successes. And, most importantly,” he paused to let her anticipation build, “they will help you find Jesus. Once you have Him on your side, you have nothing to fear.”

The woman burst into tears. She covered her face with her hands, which muffled her words. “The chur- chur- church I went to as a little girl h- had a preacher dat said dat same thang.”

Thomas wisely let her crying run its course.

“I need to find sum-thin,” she mumbled as she caught her breath. “Sum-thin other ‘an pain.”

“That something you need to find is Jesus. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” With a light pat on her back he stated, “You already knew that, didn’t you?”

She looked him the eye again. “I did know dat. Where is dis place you keep talkin’ ‘bout?”

“Some place safe. You’ll go to a house there that will help you get off of drugs and alcohol. They’ll make sure you eat right. They’ll teach you skills to make sure you can get a job when you leave their care. If you choose to stay, you’ll be welcome to become a part of the community. The choice will be yours; whatever you want to do after you turn to Jesus is up to you.”

“Ain’t nobody gonna do all dat for me,” the disbelieving woman insisted.

Placing his hand very gently on her shoulder to emphasize his point, he said, “Let me help you, please.”

“You can’t help me.”

“I only need you to let Jesus into your life. With Jesus you can leave behind your demons and live your dreams. You start walking down this new path by simply saying yes right now. I believe we were sent here to help you. Please let us help you.”

“I don’t know,” she continued to protest.

Thomas pretended to be deep in thought for a moment. “What are you planning to do for the rest of today and tomorrow?”

“Today, I’ll sit right here. This mornin’ I got kicked out’a my apartment.” She pointed to the building behind her. “I got kicked out. The landlord told me to git out, an’ he changed the locks the second I got out the door. Now, I ain’t got nowheres to go. All my stuff’s locked in my apartment; I guess ain’t nuthin’ up there worth keepin’.”

“I think you’ll agree; Jesus sent us here just in time. You should take advantage of this opportunity. You have the chance to live your life right.” Thomas’s voice took on a sterner tone. “Not many folks have people sent by Jesus show up on their doorstep when they need help the most. You need to follow Jesus. His message to you couldn’t be any clearer.”

She broke down. Her sobs rang out over the traffic and background noise of the inner city. Her tears streamed down her cheeks and puddled on the step beneath her.

As the emotional wave washed over the woman, Thomas softly spoke. “Let’s get you out of here and to someplace safe.”

Isaiah and Thomas helped her to her feet as Sally watched in amazement that the woman agreed to come with them.

The foursome returned to the mission house. They sat together in the living room until Thomas went into another room and left Sally and Isaiah with the woman.

“You made the right choice.” Isaiah tried to sound encouraging, but his lack of experience in these matters showed, and he came across as unsure of himself.

“Jesus helps everyone who turns to Him,” Sally confidently declared.

The woman looked at Sally.

“What’s your name? I’m Sally Dinton.”

“Lakeysha Williams,” the woman replied.

“Pleasure to meet you,” Sally cheerfully said.

“What was that? La-key-sha, is that right?” Isaiah asked.

The woman smiled at him. “Yeah, dat’s me.”

“Glad to have you here.” Isaiah held out his hand to be shaken.

Lakeysha stared at the hand for a few moments before shaking it. “You the first white man to ever shake my hand.”

“After you let Jesus into your life, you’ll find that you don’t notice what color people are,” Isaiah informed her with a smile.

“I hope you right.”

Thomas entered the room. “Everyone still getting along?”

“We are,” Sally said. “Lakeysha’s already seeing that Jesus gives us a new way to think about people.”

“I feel lost,” Lakeysha told them. “I don’t know what to do next. I should go see my sista an’ tell her where I is.”

Thomas used the opening she provided. “You’ll have time to do that. Right now, I have the next step on your road to a peaceful, drug and alcohol free life planned. A friend of mine is coming by to pick you up. He’ll take you to safe place where you can beat the bottle and get off drugs in a peaceful, spiritual environment.”

“Where’s dat?” Lakeysha asked, beginning to wonder what she had agreed to.

“It is a long way from where you’ll be tempted to go back to your old ways.” Thomas used a soothing tone but firm language. “If you stayed around your old neighborhood, you’d go right back to your old habits. We have to get you away from that.”

Lakeysha opened her mouth to respond, but didn’t.

“You won’t find Jesus in your old neighborhood. You know where to find all the temptations, and we have to protect you from that, at least until you’re strong enough to fight temptation yourself.”

“Hmm,” she replied. Her eyes focused on a spot on the rug in front of her.

To prevent Lakeysha from talking herself out of leaving, Thomas jumped in, “You’ll be able to leave any time you like, but we need to get you away from your old stomping ground. Deep down, you know I’m right. You need a new place for a new start. You know I’m right, don’t you?”

She pondered his words for a minute, and then nodded.

“Smart choice, Lakeysha. We have the perfect place for you to go and make your new start.”

“Where dis place at?”

Sally and Isaiah wondered the same thing.

“You’ll be taken to the Community House. It’s away from any town you know. It will give you the chance to think about Jesus and how you want to live your life without drugs and alcohol. Most importantly, being at the Community House will give you the chance to find inner peace and invite Jesus into your heart.”

Tears trickled down her cheeks again. “How can I thank you?”

Thomas patted her on the shoulder. “You’ll thank me by giving your life to Jesus. Let Him show you the way, and you’ll find more happiness than you ever believed possible.”

“Th- thank y- you, so much,” Lakeysha mumbled between sobs.

A knock at the door startled everyone.

“That must be your ride,” Thomas announced, getting up to answer the door.

Thomas quickly introduced everyone to the driver. Then he addressed Lakeysha, “Are you ready to go?”

She stood. “I don’t know. I ain’t told my sista nuthin’.”

“The moment of truth is here. You need to go and start a new life,” Thomas insisted.

She nodded. The driver led her out to the car.

The three missionaries waved goodbye from the sidewalk until the car disappeared around a corner. On the short walk back into the house Thomas asked, “What did we do right? What did we do wrong? And what can we do better?”

“I can’t image that situation going any smoother than that,” Isaiah replied.

“Me neither,” Sally concurred. “You think you did something wrong?” She shut the door behind her, reflexively locking it.

Thomas scratched his chin before responding. “Nothing we did jumps out at me as wrong, but I do want to review what we did and said in case we can find something to improve upon.”

The three of them played back the events of the last few hours in their heads.

“One thing that keeps coming up in my mind,” Isaiah said.

Thomas looked at him with raised eyebrows.

“Where did that man take her?”

“Yeah!” Sally interjected. “I’m dying to know that.”

The leader of the group smiled. “She’s headed to the Community House located twenty miles outside of Salt Lake City, Utah.”

Sally’s eyes opened wide, and she blurted out, “She’d never have agreed to go there if she knew where you were taking her was that far away!”

Thomas laughed.

“That’s not cool,” echoed Isaiah. “She didn’t know you were sending her halfway across the country right this minute.”

“Whoa,” Thomas said with his hands defensively raised but with a grin. “Lakeysha needed our help. She still does. We’ll have to pray for her tonight. Benjamin is taking her someplace where she’ll learn to help herself. She’ll learn to change her old patterns of behavior. The fact that Community House is in Utah doesn’t matter. I told her we’d send her someplace safe, and we are. She’s on her way to a new and better life without drugs and alcohol.”

Sally and Isaiah critically eyed their mission leader.

“So what’s your cutoff?” Thomas asked, mildly irritated.

Now they stared at him with baffled expressions.

“Your cutoff? How many miles from here are you willing to send Lakeysha tonight? One mile? Ten miles? One hundred?”

Sally focused on the carpet as she answered. "I don't know."

"That's a total cop-out!" A fully irritated Thomas stated. "How about you?" he addressed Isaiah. "What's your cutoff?"

Isaiah shrugged.

"What I'm hearing is, neither of you wants to help her if we couldn't do it on her doorstep. You both need to grow up and quit being so naïve. She needs serious professional help to deal with her addictions. Every professional counselor will tell you that no treatment can work if she has the daily temptation of turning back to her old habits in her old environment. I guess I'm saying that the location of our treatment facility is a benefit for her, not a drawback."

Keeping her eyes on the floor so as not to defiantly challenge Thomas, Sally pointed out, "You never did tell her she was going there right now. It seems like a long way to go on such short notice. She didn't have a chance to say goodbye to her sister or look for a closer rehab center, or anything like that."

"I didn't because we all know she never would have gone. How would the situation have sounded to her sister? Sis would've tried to talk Lakeysha out of running off with people she didn't know." Thomas took a deep breath. "Lakeysha doesn't have anyone or anything. Right now, she's in a pattern of self-destructive behavior. She knows she needs out, but any pattern she's accustomed to feels safer than taking a chance. Benjamin will tell her when he feels the time is right. For right now, she needs help making decisions that will make her life better and break her from her old patterns."

"I guess you're right," Isaiah said softly.

"No guessing to it," Thomas insisted. "I've seen this same situation hundreds of times. You'll see. In a couple of months when you go back to Salt Lake City, if you stop by the Community House, you'll find Lakeysha a changed person."

"It, uhm, seemed," Sally searched for the right word, "sneaky."

"She's free to leave the House at any time she wants," Thomas assured her. "This will be the best thing that's ever happened to her. For instance, if we took her to our local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints service this Saturday, she would still see her drug dealer around the neighborhood, and she'd know exactly where the liquor stores are. We wouldn't be helping her."

"You're right about that," a more convinced Isaiah said.

"Yeah," Sally voiced her agreement. "We had to get her out of here - fast."

Thomas nodded to Sally and spoke to Isaiah. "Sometimes doing the Lord's work requires us to be bold. When people hesitate to help themselves the Lord expects us to step in and make the decisions they're scared to make. We helped Lakeysha. That's what God wants."