

# A Biographer's Burden: Evaluating Robert Remini's *Joseph Smith* and Will Bagley's *Brigham Young*<sup>1</sup>

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DURING THE PAST YEAR, I have had the opportunity to read and review two significant books—Robert Remini's *Joseph Smith* (New York: Viking Press, 2003) and Will Bagley's *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002). The two reviews—one for each book and each for a different publication—were extremely brief and perfunctory due to space limitations. This prevented me from doing full justice to the books, and I wish to rectify that now. I confess from the onset that I am favorably impressed with both. Both provide fresh, illuminating insights into their principal subjects, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, thereby advancing the craft of Mormon biography, although I do find deficiencies in both works. The books have received nationwide attention, including reviews in such prestigious publications as the *New York Times* and the *New York Review of Books*.<sup>2</sup> Such widespread notice would seem to suggest a coming-of-age for Mormon historical scholarship.

Indeed, the fact that non-Mormon Robert Remini, a distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a nationally renowned Jacksonian scholar, would choose to write on Joseph Smith lends credence to such a coming of age. Remini is known for his definitive multi-volume biography of President Andrew Jackson, and he is a winner of the National Book Award. He has produced a compelling and, on the whole, sympathetic biogra-

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1. This was a presentation at the Sunstone West Symposium, San Francisco, April 2003.

2. Also reviewed in *Dialogue: Romini's Joseph Smith* in this issue (see p. 236) and Bagley's *Blood of the Prophets* (Vol 36, No. 3, p. 261).

phy of Joseph Smith. Despite its brevity, totaling a mere 190 pages—a limit imposed by the constraints of the "Penguin Lives Series," of which this biography is a part—Remini skillfully places the Latter-day Saint leader within the context of Jacksonian American society: "To a large extent Smith and his Church were products of a uniquely American milieu. The Jacksonian age with its democratic trust and reach for perfection provided the conditions and impetus for sudden and massive changes" (181). Remini is also even-handed and empathetic in presenting Joseph Smith as the religious leader he claimed to be: "After considerable thought, I decided to present his [Smith's] religious experiences just as he described them in his writings and let readers decide for themselves to what extent they would give credence to them. I am not out to prove or disprove any of his claims. As a historian I have tried to be as objective as possible in narrating his life and work" (x).

Using this approach, Remini effectively discusses Joseph Smith's background, specifically, his family's strong religiosity, their economic difficulties, and other adversities. Joseph Smith's early life is carefully presented, with seventy-four pages (some forty percent of the text) devoted to Smith's activities prior to 1830 when the Mormon church was formed. The author provides keen insights into young Joseph's behavior and complex personality. The youthful Smith, according to Remini was:

A quick-witted, ambitious boy, gifted with a soaring imagination, [who] demonstrated a talent for leadership and a personal need for attention and recognition. He was an outgoing and gregarious young man when playing or working with his friends. But at home in the quiet of his room or in the fields out of sight he was self-absorbed and intensely concerned about the salvation of his soul. His mother said he was much less inclined to read books than any of her other children. Like his father, he was "far more given to meditation and deep study" (41).

Remini includes a vivid account of five-year old Joseph's bout with typhoid fever complicated by osteomyelitis, a serious bacterial infection of the bone and marrow in his leg. The young boy was compelled to endure the trauma of invasive surgery. A team of surgeons from nearby Dartmouth College removed chunks of diseased bone without anesthesia in order to save his leg. With perceptive insight, Remini theorizes concerning both the short and long-range consequences of this ordeal:

What emotional and psychological scars he carried into adulthood is impossible to state with certainty. But surely the illness, the excruciating pain he suffered for months, and the limp he developed must have had a tremendous psychological impact on him and on the kind of person he became. It is entirely possible that it conditioned him for the career he chose and the suffering and persecution he later endured. It may even have focused his attention more sharply on the afterlife (26).

The factors which made Smith a successful religious leader are succinctly described. In Remini's words, Joseph "demonstrated remarkable administrative skills in establishing the [LDS] Church, shaping its focus and guiding its future direction" (86). As a religious leader, moreover, Smith was sensitive to the mood of the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century when citizens "wanted preachers who could rouse their emotions and offer them dramatic evidence of their faith and commitment" (86). Smith fit into "this mold to perfection." Smith projected

a new voice, a dramatic voice, a certain voice, a voice that throbbed with convictions and seemed to many to be divinely inspired. He claimed direct and frequent communication with God—and the people believed him. He offered to ordinary citizens, especially the poor, a sense of self-worth and a sense of belonging. In a constantly changing world, one in which the future seemed so uncertain, his followers found an identity in a community of other believers. They found meaning and direction in their lives. The Mormon Church met some of their deepest psychological and emotional needs because to them it offered a guarantee of truth (87).

Moreover, Smith was "a man of compelling charisma, charm, and persuasiveness, a man absolutely convinced that his religious authority came directly from God" (87).

At the same time, Remini carefully outlines the many reasons "Joseph and his Mormon brethren [were] hated with such intensity as to provoke mob violence and murder" (175). Foremost among these was Smith's "contention that all other religions and their preachers were corrupt and an abomination in the sight of God" (175). Also considered "outright blasphemy" to non-Mormons were Smith's claims that "he spoke regularly to God" and "had brought forth another bible [the Book of Mormon] that provided a true history of the lost tribes of Israel" (176). "To make matters worse," the Mormon religion "seemed to make a mockery of fundamental Christian beliefs, with such teachings as polygamy," baptism for the dead, a plurality of gods, the ability of mortal men and women to become gods themselves, and the concept that "God the father being once a man. . . passed through a stage of mortality before becoming God" (176). Also engendering hostility were "economic factors. . . Either Mormons were criticized when impoverished because they placed an 'insupportable burden of pauperism' on the community; or when prosperous they aroused the jealousy and resentment of those less fortunate" (176-77). Intolerance toward the Mormons "frequently sprang from their clannishness"—specifically their tendency to act together, vote together, and patronize only Mormon establishments (177).

According to Remini, Smith's assassination resulted directly from the Mormon leader's "political activities" in Nauvoo, which were viewed as "extremely dangerous to the citizens of surrounding towns." Specifically, Smith "had built a theocratic dictatorship in Nauvoo," guarded by the Nauvoo Legion, "a standing

army of five thousand heavily armed men. . . whose very existence terrorized Gentiles" (177). The "last straw" was Smith's 1844 campaign for U.S. president, whereby many non-Mormons felt that he "had become a menace to freedmen everywhere and had to be eliminated" (178). As Remini perceptively notes, "Mixing religion and politics can have disastrous consequences and release forces that tarnish the most cherished ideals of American Justice" (181).

With balance and sensitivity, Remini sums up the multifaceted personality and significance of Joseph Smith as follows:

As a prophet Joseph was burdened by many human frailties. He craved recognition and appreciation of his work. Shrewd and even cunning at times, he was a proud man who knew his own worth yet suffered many moments of insecurity and self-doubt. At once kind and generous toward others he also scrambled after material gain for himself and his Church. He had a deeply controlling temperament and brooked no opposition to his leadership. An optimist, he remained steadfast in his beliefs to the end, despite repeated reversals and defeats. In him the strains of egotism, pragmatism, courage, gentleness, pretension, and jealousy were blended together. A man of little formal education but of striking intellectual power, he produced a vast amount of religious writing that has influenced millions around the world (180).

Despite its strengths, Remini's biography is not without flaws. Among the most significant is its superficiality of analysis and, most disturbing, its numerous errors of fact. Such problems stem from the apparent haste in which the book was researched and written. The author failed to consult and make use of crucial primary sources written by Joseph Smith and his associates as contained in the LDS Church Historical Archives in Salt Lake City and in the Community of Christ (formerly RLDS) Archives in Independence, Missouri. Instead he relied on the published writings of Smith and his mother, along with biographical writings of other individuals, including Fawn M. Brodie, Richard L. Bushman, Donna Hill, and Heidi S. Swinton—essentially producing a synthesis. Remini also drew on information from the works of various other scholars, specifically Richard Lloyd Anderson, Leonard Arrington, Milton V. Backman, D. Michael Quinn, and Grant Underwood. Yet he ignored important works of other writers in the field of Mormon studies.

These problems are reflected in Remini's treatment of Joseph Smith and polygamy. The author is inaccurate when he says that "[m]ost of his [Joseph Smith's plural] wives were teenagers" (154), and his conjecture concerning the "number of wives" Smith took "under this new covenant" is confusing. In the author's words, "the exact figure is still debated; but it is 'at least twenty-seven', according to one Mormon historian." Further obscuring the issue, Remini claims, "[O]ther historians have guessed" that Smith had a number that "might be as low as a few or as high as eighty-four" (153). The confusion stems from the simple fact that Remini failed to consult the most recent scholarship on the

topic, specifically, Lawrence Foster's *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Carmon Hardy's *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1992), and especially Todd L. Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997). Through meticulous research, Compton has narrowed the estimate of Joseph Smith's plural wives at somewhere between thirty-three and forty. Of this total, ten were teenagers at the time of their marriages.

Also problematic is Remini's error-filled treatment of race, slavery, and the changing status of African-Americans within Mormonism. The author mistakenly states that the Mormon printing house and press in Independence, Missouri, "were destroyed after printing a pro-abolitionist article" in July 1833 (115). Actually, the Latter-day Saints at that time were anti-abolitionist rather than pro-abolitionist. Mob violence against the Mormons in this instance was due to publication of an article "Free People of Color" in the church-owned newspaper, *Evening and Morning Star*. This article outlined the necessary procedures for the migration of free African-American Latter-day Saints into Missouri, the location of Mormonism's Zion. Remini's discussion of the origins of the controversial policy of Mormon black priesthood denial is misleading. The author's suggestion of a link between Smith's Book of Abraham and this now-defunct practice is confusing. In the words of Remini, the Book of Abraham verse that "the Pharaoh of Egypt [as] a descendant of Ham could not hold the priesthood. . . later justified Church policy of denying the priesthood to African-Americans, since they supposedly descended from Ham" (107).

Actually, Mormon black priesthood denial was not implemented until 1847, and not by Joseph Smith but rather by Brigham Young, some three years after the first Mormon prophet's death. Moreover, this practice emerged in a complex, tangled fashion, historically documented by the extensive works of Lester E. Bush, Armand L. Mauss, and me—none of whom are cited in Remini's biography. As for the Book of Abraham, it was not used as a scriptural proof text for black priesthood denial until many years after Joseph Smith's death.

These significant problems notwithstanding, Robert V. Remini's *Joseph Smith* is an important work, deserving the attention of scholars and interested lay readers concerned with Mormon studies. This biography is a readable revisionist account standing in contrast to Fawn Brodie's more hard-edged *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), as well as the more recent, positive biographies of Donna Hill, Richard Bushman, and Heidi Swenton. Despite Remini's skillful, lively prose style and articulate placement of Joseph Smith within the context of Jacksonian America, the book's shortcomings dramatize the fact that the truly definitive biography of Mormonism's founder remains to be written.

In contrast to Remini's Joseph Smith, Will Bagley's *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* is not a biography *per se*, although the colorful, controversial Utah Mormon leader is a central figure in Bagley's work, as suggested by its subtitle. Bagley carefully notes that his study is "neither a complete biography of Brigham Young nor a comprehensive history of the Latter-day Saints," stating that Mountain Meadows was but "a single incident in the long career" of the Mormon leader" (xv, xvi). Correctly characterizing Young "a complex man" who must be recognized for "his many achievements," Bagley suggests grudging respect for the Mormon leader, whom he describes as "one of the most remarkable Americans of any age" (xvi, 18). At the same time, the author characterizes the Mountain Meadows Massacre as "a watershed event" in the life of Brigham Young and for the larger Mormon church (xiv-xv).

Particularly compelling is Bagley's discussion of Joseph Smith's influence on Brigham Young as the Mormon prophet's successor. Young was "disheartened by the murder of his beloved friend [Joseph Smith] but determined to carry on his legacy" (18). "Young's determination to complete the work of Joseph Smith by any cost and by any means created. . . a culture of violence," according to Bagley (39), but at the same time, Young "was never comfortable with his role as prophet" and felt "caught in" this role. Young's religious insights, moreover, "lacked the certainty of Joseph Smith's personal conversations with the Lord." Instead, "uncharacteristic hesitation marked Young's conduct. How would he lead the Saints if he could not speak with God face-to-face as Smith had done?" This problem was resolved in what Bagley describes as a "powerful personal epiphany," "vision," or "dream," wherein Young encountered and "talked with" the dead, departed Smith, this supernatural event occurring in February 1847 at Winter Quarters:

Brigham Young found Joseph Smith sitting near a bright window. Taking Smith's hand and kissing him on both cheeks, Young asked "why we could not be together as we once were." Smith told him "it was all right, that [they] should not be together yet." The dead seer addressed the question that most troubled his disciple: How to be a prophet and keep the spirit of the Lord. "[The] mind of man must be open to receive all spirits in order to be prepared, to receive the spirit of the Lord," he advised. "When the still small voice speaks always receive it." Smith gave Young a sweeping vision of the plan of salvation. When it ended, "Joseph was in the edge of the light; but where I had to go was as midnight darkness," Young recalled, and he "went back in the darkness." Young told his fellow apostles to remember his dream, for it was "a vision of God and revealed through the Spirit of Joseph. . . . This profound experience resolved Brigham Young's doubts about his role as Joseph Smith's heir. It gave him the confidence he needed to lead the Saints and inspired his belief that God had called him to implement Smith's vision. A new dynamism and conviction replaced Young's self-doubt and hesitation, for he believed God would inspire and direct his actions" (39).

However, Bagley is somewhat confusing elsewhere in assessing the significance of this event. He maintains that Young's self-doubts remained strong throughout the course of his life. Young's deep-seated insecurities, according to Bagley, prompted Young "to make greater spiritual and economic demands of his followers" and to "habitually" blame "others for his own mistakes" and bad decisions. His insecurity about his role as prophet and "his total devotion to the most radical doctrines of Joseph Smith also led to provocative acts that had fateful consequences for his people" (40). Bagley asserts that Young "was never comfortable with his role as prophet." Upon being "sustained as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator in October 1857, Young said, '[The] titles always [make] me feel as though I am called more than I am deserving of. I am Brigham Young, an Apostle of Joseph Smith, and also of Jesus Christ'" (39). Yet Bagley overstates his case concerning the nature and depth of Brigham Young's insecurities, particularly after he assumed leadership of the church following Joseph Smith's death.

Bagley is more convincing when discussing Young's qualities as a pragmatic leader: "Brigham Young's pragmatism persuaded him to keep his options open, always maintaining a contingency plan in case his prophetic powers failed him" (75). Young's pragmatism was evident during the difficult period of the 1850s, as the Mormon leader considered various options regarding Mormonism's permanent gathering place: "During the famine of 1855, Young considered abandoning the Great Basin and moving the entire church to San Bernardino" (48). Yet these same "desperate economic conditions. . . fueled a new [Mormon] drive for statehood" (48). On a grander scale, Young envisioned Mormon "control [of] the whole [North American] continent" (48). He summed up his options: "I say, as the Lord lives, we are bound to become a sovereign State in the Union, or as an independent nation, by ourselves, and let them [the enemies of the Church] drive us from this place if they can; they cannot do it" (48).

Particularly thoughtful is Bagley's excellent account of Brigham Young's complex attitudes and multifaceted relationship with Native Americans, which the author develops throughout his study. Young led the way in asserting that the Indians, among whom the Latter-day Saints had settled, were the literal descendants of the Book of Mormon Lamanites and, thus, "shared the blood of Israel with the Mormons and were destined to assist them [the Latter-day Saints] in the conflicts that would precede the return of Christ" (22). As colorfully stated by Bagley, American Indians as the so-called "'stick of Joseph' would be the [Mormons'] most powerful allies and fearsome weapon, the battle-ax of the Lord" (26).

At the same time, Young "preached that the Indians 'must be saved, for they are the children of Abraham'" (26). To further this end, and in literal fulfillment of Book of Mormon prophecy, Young predicted that "the Elders would marry Wives of every tribe of Indians," enabling "the Lamanites [to] become a White & delightful people" (28). In further pursuit of this goal of Mormon eugenics, Young advised his followers "to buy up Lamanite children as fast as they could, educate them and teach them the gospel so that many generations would not

pass ere they should become a white and delightsome people" (31).

Negative aspects of Mormon-Indian relations are also carefully chronicled by Bagley: "Brigham Young's 'regrettable strategy of selective extermination' ultimately challenged their very survival." Young's Indian policy, essentially an "open hand and mailed fist" approach, "gave the Indians the choice of becoming enemies or dependent clients of the Mormons" (25). To make matters worse, Brigham Young's tenure as Utah Territorial Superintendent of Indian Affairs was "riddled [with] corruption. . . but with a twist," in that the Mormon leader "never spent a dollar on the Indians in Utah" except to wage war against them or "to promote the interests of his church" (25). Moreover, Young clashed with federally appointed Indian Agent Garland Hurt over Indian policy. Acting against Young's wishes, Hurt promoted a policy of "large farms for the Utes" designed to eliminate that tribe's dependency on the local white Mormon population (47).

Also compelling and convincing is Bagley's discussion of Mormon millennialistic expectations as they affected Brigham Young's behavior. Young's apocalyptic expectations that "the end of time was near" (36) reached a climax during the heightened tension surrounding the Utah War of 1857. Such expectations clearly influenced the Mormon leader's actions in the events leading up to the Mountain Meadows Massacre (81). Even after this crisis, Young's "profound belief in the millennium remained unshaken, even if its imminence required recalculation" (210). Indeed, Mormon millennialistic expectations enjoyed a sharp revival with the advent of the Civil War, wherein Young and other church leaders proclaimed that "the nation was doomed to destruction and no power could save it" (253).

Bagley is much less satisfactory in his account of the complex, tangled relationship between Brigham Young and John D. Lee, a key figure in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. In places, the author's discussion is confusing and less-than-convincing. In noting that Lee was "adopted" as a son into Brigham Young's family in December 1845, just prior to the Mormon evacuation of Nauvoo, Bagley appears to downplay the significance of this event: "Through the law of adoption, a temple ordinance since abandoned, virtually every priesthood member was adopted into the extended families of Mormon authorities." Thus, Lee was merely one of thirty-eight men sealed to Young "as sons." However, Bagley proceeds to note that Lee himself attached great importance to this act, claiming to be "Young's first adopted son" and actually "began signing his correspondence J. D. L. Young" (19).

A more serious deficiency is Bagley's vagueness in outlining the dynamics of the Young/Lee relationship. Left unanswered is a basic question: What precisely, brought the two men together in the first place? A second question remains: What bound them together through good times as well as bad? Bagley does note that a crucial point of contact was a romantic attraction felt by both Young and Lee to the same woman, Emmeline Free. Lee actually met Emmeline first, and in late 1845 was engaged to marry her. Shortly thereafter, Young met Emmeline "and, much to Lee's dismay, also "fell in love with her." At this criti-



cal juncture, Young promised Lee that if he would surrender Emmeline, Young in compensation "would uphold Lee 'in time and eternity & he never should fall,' and that he [Lee] would sit at Young's right hand in his kingdom." Despite its grand theological implications, Young's offer "tormented Lee, for he loved Emmeline dearly." But in the end, Lee gave in to Young's wishes. Emmeline became one of Young's favorite wives, bearing him a total of ten children" (21). In his account, Bagley implies (without directly saying so) that Young's courtship of and marriage to Emmeline Free was linked to his decision to adopt John D. Lee as a son. This same incident might also have influenced Young's willingness to include Lee in his inner circle through membership in the exclusive, secret Council of the Fifty, important in Mormon millennialistic plans to establish their temporal Kingdom of God (20).

The dynamics of the Young-Lee relationship continued in the years following the Mormon migration to the Great Basin, even though Lee was prone to erratic often excessive behavior, making him something of a "loose cannon." This is evident in several incidents described in Bagley's narrative: "Lee's domineering personality spawned speculation about his business dealings and sexual habits. 'Lee was a swindler in dealing; a liar in conversation, and a low sensual brute of a man,' who had eight wives living with him in a home 'that was little better than a house of ill fame'" (263).

Particularly intriguing and, indeed, perplexing about the Young-Lee relationship, is the remarkable fact that Lee, despite his erratic, excessive personality and despite being made the sole "scapegoat" for the Mountain Meadows Massacre, did not implicate Brigham Young as an accessory *before* the fact. This is evident in the "Confessions" penned by Lee just prior to his execution in February 1877, wherein he blamed the Indians, "thereby shifting primary responsibility away from both the LDS church and himself" (313). As for Brigham Young's response, Bagley—in a critical, most revealing account—notes that when the Mormon leader received word of John D. Lee's execution, that the condemned man "had remained true to the church, [he, Young] 'fell on his knees and cried like a baby.'" Young allegedly remarked that "John [D. Lee] always told me he would stand between me and the mouth of the cannon, but I was afraid he would falter when it came to the test" (317).

The central question addressed in Bagley's book is, of course: Was Brigham Young, indeed, an accessory before the fact? The author answers this question with a resounding and unequivocal "Yes!" Indeed, Bagley does present a compelling case. In the author's own words, the "fate" of the Fancher party was "sealed in a [1 September 1857] meeting in Great Salt Lake between the leaders of the Southern Paiute [Indian] bands" and Brigham Young whom the Indians addressed as "Big Um" (112). Present at this meeting were various "tribal leaders said to have been at the massacre" (128). These events took place against the backdrop of the Utah War and the dispatch of Federal troops to Utah. Brigham Young warned U.S. Army Captain Stewart Van Vliet, sent to Salt Lake City ahead of the troops: "If the government dare to force the issue, I shall not hold

the Indians by the wrist any longer. . . . If the issue comes, you may tell the government to stop all emigration across the continent, for the Indians will kill all who attempt it" (135). In elaborating on the role of the Indians, Brigham Young stated in a significant and important 12 September 1857 letter:

The check rein has broken, and cousin Lemuel is out at large, in fact he has been already collecting some of his annuities. Day after day, I am visited by their chiefs to know if they may strike while the iron is hot. If President Buchanan did not deal justly with the Mormons, "the war cry will resound from the Rio Colorado to the head waters of the Missouri—from the Black Hills to the Sierra Nevada—travel will be stopped across the continent—the deserts of Utah become a battle ground for freedom. It is peace and [Mormons'] rights—or the knife and tomahawk—let Uncle Sam chose. (139)

Bagley succinctly sums up Young's "mixed feelings about the massacre" after it had occurred. According to Bagley, Young characterized the massacre as "a righteous and necessary act of vengeance that confirmed his hope the Lamanites were ready to take up their role as the battle-ax of the Lord and help usher in the millennium. But he recognized the peril to him and the Latter-day Saints' cause if word leaked out that the Mormons had joined the Indians in the slaughter of an entire wagon train" (175-76). At the same time, Bagley asserts that "Young felt that this was the most unfortunate affair that ever befell the Church" (176).

As for Bagley's basic contention that Brigham Young was an accessory before the fact in the events leading to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, this reviewer remains unconvinced. Brigham Young in his rhetoric to the Saints clearly contributed to a "culture of violence" and millennialistic fervor during the Utah War, a time of extreme tension, and in this explosive environment, it seems clear that the Mormon leader also encouraged general acts of Indian deprivation along the Overland Trail. However, Bagley has failed to make a convincing case as to *how* and *why* Brigham Young would single out the Fancher Party for destruction. Bagley's evidence notwithstanding, in this reviewer's opinion the author has not sufficiently proven his case that Brigham Young specifically ordered the massacre of the Fancher Party at Mountain Meadows.

Also problematic is Brigham Young's primary motive—as cited by Bagley—to "avenge the blood of the prophets," a central argument in his book, and indeed, its primary title. In particular, Bagley's assertion that Young sought to atone for the recent murder of Apostle Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas is both tenuous and unconvincing. Much more viable as causes for the massacre were various conditions involving extreme tension within the Mormon community, sparked by the advance of federal troops into Utah in the Fall of 1857, compounded by the "white hot fervor" of the Mormon Reformation which created a heightened urgency and sense of millennialistic expectations or "end times," wherein only righteous true believers would survive to witness the Second

Coming and related glorious events. By contrast, wicked non-believers would and should be destroyed, in the opinion of more fanatical Latter-day Saints. Brigham Young and other church leaders further whipped these tensions through fiery sermons and inflammatory rhetoric. This, in turn, stirred up "grass roots" Latter-day Saints to a fever pitch, especially in southern Utah, causing leaders there to strike against the Fancher Party, which unfortunately happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Bagley is on much firmer ground when he captures the essence of Brigham Young's personality, providing keen insights into a complex, multifaceted individual. I confess that Bagley's critical, hard-edged presentation has caused me to rethink some of my own preconceived notions concerning Young. But even here, Bagley's portrait tends to be skewed, overemphasizing the negative—which is understandable, given the author's emphasis on Young's involvement with the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Focusing on a significant, negative aspect of a biographical subject's life inevitably inspires an overall negative portrait. This was certainly evident in my own initial examination of Brigham Young in *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People Within Mormonism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981). In this work, Young emerges as highly racist in his attitudes and behavior, particularly toward African-Americans. This was most significantly reflected in the Mormon leader's role as chief architect of the church's ban on ordaining black males to the priesthood. In reaction to such highly negative perceptions of Young, I felt compelled to examine the Mormon leader within the larger context of his total life and career. The result was my brief biography, *Brigham Young and the Expanding American Frontier* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Co., 1986) wherein I sought to present the Mormon leader in a more balanced and comprehensive light.

As for Bagley's portrayal of Brigham Young, his compelling portrait will hopefully stimulate renewed scholarly interest in the Mormon leader, building upon Leonard Arrington's 1985 magnum opus, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985). While Arrington's biography was certainly a seminal work for its time, it was far from definitive. Arrington failed to adequately use the essential primary sources written by and to the Mormon leader, along with the papers of other church leaders who knew and interacted with Young, all then available in the LDS Church Historical Department. More problematic was Arrington's basic interpretation of the Mormon leader, wherein he overemphasized Young's role as church and corporate leader, giving inadequate attention to Young's human side, particularly the complex aspects of his personality, with all its flaws, frailties, and insecurities. Indeed, Arrington's highly positive portrait is very much reflective of the optimistic time in which it was produced—the so-called "Camelot Period" of Mormon studies, which Arrington himself promoted and vainly fought to preserve. Now in much different times, both for the church and American society at large, an extensive biographical reexamination of Brigham Young is in order. Indeed, as with Joseph Smith,