

Brigham Young's Telestial Kingdom

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On March 4, 1849, Brigham Young summoned a convention to draft a constitution for the proposed State of Deseret. The convention's work was rapidly completed and an election held eight days later. Voters approved the constitution and elected Brigham Young, Governor, his First Counselor, Heber C. Kimball elected Chief Judge, and Second Counselor, Willard Richards, Secretary of State. All 674 votes approved each.

There were discrepancies between the constitutional officers and the slate of elected offices. Further, the constitution set the initial election to occur on "the first Monday in May," not eight days after the convention. This departure was because Brigham Young and the Council of Fifty predetermined the outcome. Voters ratified President Young's actions and ignored the constitution. Leonard Arrington attributed this discrepancy to "the informal manner in which Brigham Young and his coterie of associates ran things." That "informality" was possible because of the unique roles of Brigham Young.

The Council of Fifty was a shadow government originally established by Joseph Smith that influenced the thinking of Brigham Young throughout his time as Governor. The story of his 1851-1858 governorship therefore begins in 1844 when Joseph Smith first organized the Council of Fifty. The full name of the Council of Fifty was "The Kingdom of God and His Laws with the Keys and Power[s] thereof, and Judgment in the Hands of His Servants, Ahman Christ." The name was too long for convenience and therefore was not widely known or regularly used. The two most frequently used names were "The Kingdom of God" or "The Council of Fifty." Today, most Latter-day Saints aware of its existence would recognize it as the "Council of Fifty." However, the early Church leaders generally called it "The Kingdom of God" or "The Kingdom." It was the venue where Joseph Smith established his own "Kingship" by being chosen as "our prophet Priest, & King by Hosannas." When Joseph Smith spoke in the late-Nauvoo period about "the Kingdom," or "the keys of the Kingdom," he was referring to this council. It was to this council Joseph Smith gave "the keys of the Kingdom" so his inner group of followers could perpetuate this "Kingdom of God" after his death.

Joseph's anointing to king was the early culmination of salvation. God intended to "exalt" those who were worthy, a status associated with kingship in this life and godhood in the next. The revelation recorded July 12, 1843 states: "Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; ... then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them."

Joseph lived and died in stratified antebellum America. Slavery was divisive. Nevertheless, a religious idea of subservient angels obeying the commands of a worthy and exalted man in a stratified afterlife was easy to understand and accept. We may find it conceptually hard in post-Civil War/post-Civil Rights America but Joseph and his contemporaries lived in a differently ordered society. Like his predecessor, Brigham Young was also ordained a

“King, Priest and Ruler over Israel.” Remarks by Governor Young clearly indicate he viewed his status to rule over others as God-given and kingly. In a sermon delivered on June 19, 1853, two years into his initial term, Governor Young addressed the saints in the Salt Lake Tabernacle as the church president. He explained: “We have got a Territorial Government, and I am and will be Governor, and no power can hinder it, until the Lord Almighty, says, ‘Brigham, you need not be Governor any longer,’ and then I am willing to yield to another Governor.” Arrington’s explanation for the “informal manner in which Brigham and his coterie of associates ran things” is best understood against this other, less public Mormon practice. Brigham Young felt comfortable contradicting the draft Territorial constitution because he was king, and could therefore exercise kingly rule. He called the convention, gave them the mandate, and wanted Territorial recognition from Congress. He knew they would not approve a Rocky Mountain monarchy; therefore he at least wanted the appearance of democratic rule.

Kingship in the Americas is disapproved in the Book of Mormon. It directs: “[T]his land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon this land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.” Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon; Brigham Young was converted because of it. Therefore, we should consider the meaning of this limitation on kingship. Joseph Smith was anointed “king” before Brigham Young, but Joseph’s kingship was entirely theological, private, and non-governmental. His precedent did little to support the form of “kingship” implemented by Brigham Young.

The earliest events in Utah combined church and state in the person of Brigham Young. Without him there was no order – social, religious or political. Everything revolved around the church, and after December 1847 the church revolved around him. Colonizer, Governor, Church President, Prophet, Apostle, Lion of the Lord, American Moses, orator, and first citizen; the society of saints were overshadowed by this leader in a way which mirrored, if not exceeded, the way colonial America respected and followed George Washington. Either man could have cut corners, had they elected to do so. In the case of Washington, we have no instance of him doing so. In the case of Brigham Young, however, corners were cut beginning with his initial election.

States have a monopoly on the power to take property, fine, punish, imprison, and even kill its citizens. Brigham Young’s religion, however, held no such authority. “[W]e do not believe that any religious society has authority to try men on the right of property or life, to take from them this world’s goods, or to put them in jeopardy of either life or limb, or to inflict any physical punishment upon them. They can only excommunicate them from their society, and withdraw from them their fellowship.” When analyzing Brigham Young’s tenure as Territorial Governor, it is impossible to distinguish between his role as head of state and head of church. Parsing his conduct on the basis of the kind of power used (i.e., the power to punish beyond fellowship) clarifies these two roles merged, for he ruled as if there were no separation between the two.

When the church members who followed the Quorum of the Twelve were expelled from Nauvoo mid-winter, they governed themselves through the church. “[C]hurch authorities

believed that the Kingdom of God was a political as well as a spiritual kingdom, and that the Priesthood was directly responsible for the effective conduct of civil government.” Before the United States provided any recognized appointments the church filled a vacuum. The church’s existing structure was capable of governing. It only made sense the church would provide the structure of both church and state.

Despite all the practical reasons, and obvious necessity for the church to step into the void, the distinction between church and state does matter.

The power of the state is derived from the right of an individual in a state of nature to punish and retaliate for offenses to the individual. As John Locke stated in his Second Treatise on Civil Government:

[That,] he who has suffered the damage has a right to demand in his own name, ...the goods or service of the offender, by right of self-preservation, as every man has a power to punish the crime, to prevent its being committed again, by the right he has of preserving all mankind, and doing all reasonable things he can in order to that end: and thus it is, that every man, in the state of nature, has a power to kill a murderer, both to deter others from doing the like injury, ...and therefore may be destroyed as a lion or a tiger, one of those wild savage beasts, with whom men can have no society nor security...”

John Lockes’ explanation of state power and Brigham Young’s views were similar. The Book of Mormon has little to recommend combining both the office of “High Priest” over the church with “Chief Judge” over the land. Alma refused it, ceding the power of government to Nephihah and retaining the office of “High Priest over the Church” for himself. Likewise, Joseph Smith, by revelation, gave Hyrum the priesthood and made him co-President, as Joseph assumed the office of “king.” Unlike Alma, Governor Young chose to remain both with such tenacity that it required an Act of Congress, the Commander in Chief, and the US Army to pry the governorship from his hands.

The application of becoming United States territory was controversial. Debate lasted for nearly a year in the US Senate. When finally passed, President Millard Fillmore signed the bill on September 9, 1850 and appointed Brigham Young the first territorial governor of the Territory of Utah. He was officially sworn into the office of territorial governor on February 3, 1851. “Brigham Young, Governor of Deseret by popular vote, was now Governor of Utah by presidential appointment[.]” This only confirmed the existing reality. Here is an illustration of the problem with holding two roles:

On June 15, 1851, speaking as Church President about horse theft and Indians, Brigham Young said, (after explaining Indians are taught to steal from birth and whites were taught not to steal): “[W]hile they are in their degraded state, it rests upon us to use wisdom and judgment in their behalf. I say to the Saints, kill every white man you see stealing and not

kill the Indian for it, for the white men know better. I speak to the Saints not as the Governor of Utah, but you and I are sent to save Israel not to kill them." Killing (an impermissible penalty for the church) is being advocated to an audience of "the Saints," yet he stressed he did not speak as "Governor of Utah." Six days later he told the Saints: "[W]e are a kingdom and must bring the kingdom in subject to the will of God." He conflated the two, because the two conflated in him.

President Young gave a definition of "liberty" in a sermon on June 29, 1851, some of which reads like John Locke:

The spirit of liberty is the spirit of submission. If you wish to enjoy liberty in your fullness you must submit to the rule to the land of liberty. The privilege of living in liberty to all eternity adopt every holy principle and gather together every thing on earth and make you happy... You are not at liberty to infringe on the rights of your neighbors. If a man injure me, I am at liberty to make him pay for it. Every person in heaven is at liberty when they have the privilege to organize a kingdom for themselves, but unless they are submissive to their presidents on earth, they never can have the privilege to the last day of eternity. If they are faithful here, they will be make gods in eternity.

Submission to "their presidents on earth," meaning church leaders, was the price of godhood in eternity. The prize offered for submitting to the earthly president will be eternal godhood. The bounds of the Mormon kingdom were never limited to the Great Basin. Governor Young explained: "All things will have to bow to Mormonism or eternal light and truth. We have the true government of all the earth." If Mormonism had the right to govern "all the earth" and Brigham Young was its earthly king, then it follows there should be no conceptual end of his kingdom.

Fiery rhetoric from Brigham Young was commonplace. Initially it was more alarming in tone than in effect. However, continuing fiery rhetoric combined with deteriorating environmental circumstances did finally result in unfortunate events which were only possible because church and state merged in Brigham Young.

In January 1852, Governor Young spoke to the Legislature about slavery, sin and punishment. Borrowing from the Law of Moses, he declared: "The time will come, that if a man will take the name of God in vain, he will be hewn down without judgment or trial!" He added: "The time will also come when if the parents are sanctified before the Lord, and their children rise up in disobedience against them, they will be hewn down." This talk contributes to controversy still within Mormonism today, that a man must be killed for his own sins.

In the days of ancient Israel, justice was dealt out in a manner that showed they understood principle, and revered the commandments of God. It was a mercy to many to have justice and judgment executed upon them on the Earth, even to be slain and have their blood poured out upon the Earth, that it might be tolerable for them. God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed, that He would save them. When they committed sin, He slew them, that He might save them, by their spilling their blood as an offering. Had they lived in sin, they might have sinned so as not to have been forgiven or saved. It was mercy to slay them.

The next day he added: "It is the greatest blessing that could come to some men to shed their blood on the ground, and let it come up before the Lord as an atonement." Brigham Young, as king, thought it his burden to create righteous people, even if it required some to die to accomplish it. A few years later this kind of rhetoric would bring about the Mormon Reformation, which was the beginning of the end for his governorship.

In an address to the two houses of the Legislature on January 29, 1852, he commented: "we find it is a hard matter to enact human laws to govern a divine kingdom." The governor and church president, or 'priest and king,' saw the challenge. The Legislature were stewards over "human laws" but he was steward over "a divine kingdom." The solution to the challenge, he explained, was to "draw out from the laws which God has given for His divine Kingdom. And make enactments to control all people, to a certain extent under the divine control of His own Kingdom on Earth, this I also believe." To clarify that his ambition was not limited to the Territory of Utah, but would expand to dominate the whole world, Governor Young declared:

For as the Lord lives, and as this people lives, they have this to do sooner or later. They have to usher forth their enactments, to govern the Jews and the Gentiles, and all the nations which are included with Israel, and with the Gentiles, that every professed Christian, every religious denomination, and every government under the whole heaven may find shelter under this broad banner which shall be spread over them by the Lord Almighty. That I also believe.

If God owns this world, then His Kingdom ought to rule over all of it. As he put it: "Jehovah is my king. I care not what can be said to the contrary. The Lord Jehovah is my king and instructor, and I wish you to serve Him. That is the way I would do it if I was in the Legislature[.]"

Non-Mormon federal appointees left Utah accusing Governor Young of being a dictator. He responded that he had the right to dictate. There were no traditional American constraints

because he answered to a much higher authority. God and the Council of Fifty made him king.

I am accused by our honorable judges who have left this Territory last fall of entering into the Legislative Hall and there dictating them. That is an objection that will be raised and will be presented to President Fillmore; that I entered into the Halls of Legislature and there dictate them. I do dictate and I never expect to see the day while I am Governor amongst this people that I don't do it, and I want it published abroad for it is what I believe in, and it is what you believe in. ...I want these Gentlemen to realize, to be fully sensible of, is simply this; that when they meet here in a legislative capacity, not to forget that they are Elders in Israel, Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are Saints of the Most High God, and I hope and pray that a feeling to the contrary of this may never arise in the bosom of anyone of these men. ...[Referring to pre-Territorial days] We then legislated for the benefit of the inhabitants of the State of Deseret. The most of them belonged to the council that is called the Council of Fifty.

On the possibility the he could be removed as Governor by President Fillmore, he added: "They may send another governor here, but I shall govern the people by the Eternal Priesthood of the Son of God."

Brigham Young wanted it so that even if a man wanted to apostatize from the religion their economic survival prevented it:

If any man is in darkness through the deceitfulness of riches, it is good policy for him to bind up his wealth in this Church, so that he cannot command it again, and he will be apt to cleave to the kingdom. If a man has the purse in his pocket, and he apostatizes, he takes it with him; but if his worldly interest is firmly united to the Kingdom of God, when he arises to go away, he finds the calf is bound, and, like the cow, he is unwilling to forsake it. If his calf is bound up here, he will be inclined to stay; all his interest is here, and ever likely the Lord will open his eyes, so that he will properly understand his true situation, and his heart will chime in with the will of his God in a very short time. Were we to dedicate our moral and intellectual influence, and our earthly wealth to the Lord, our hearts would be very likely to applaud our acts. This reasoning is for those who do not feel exactly to subscribe to all that has been said this morning, with regard to dedicating ourselves to the cause of truth. This is what you must do to obtain an

exaltation. The Lord must be first and foremost in our affections, the building of His kingdom demands our first consideration.

President Young envisioned merging Saint to church, church to state, and himself in control of it all. One great beehive, united and working for one purpose: to support the king's efforts to further his King's will. There was something much bigger going on. "The Millennium consists in this — every heart in the Church and Kingdom of God being united in one; the Kingdom increasing to the overcoming of everything opposed to the economy of heaven, and Satan being bound."

As criticism from all sides continued to mount, President Young declared in October 1852 how futile it was to consider removing him:

What says the United States? "Let us send a governor there; let us send our judges there." But what do they cry? "We have no influence or power, for there are other men there who rule, and we cannot help it; they have the reins of government and turn the people whithersoever they will, and we cannot help ourselves." What did a gentleman say to Mr. Fillmore? Said he, "You need not send anybody there, for Brigham Young is Governor, and he will govern the people all the time; and there is no other man that can govern them." If there is any truth in this, it is, he will do so as long as the Lord lets him.

He said exactly what he meant. Later events, including removing him from power over the state, the abolition of plural marriage, domestication of the church by the nation, all influence the way Mormons now interpret his words. Consider for a moment on the literal meaning of this: "How are this people to be ruled, to be dictated in their future course. The Lord Almighty had built up his kingdom, here is the church and kingdom of the Lord [God] Almighty upon the earth. This is the kingdom [the church] to this kingdom [the world]."

Five days later, speaking of those who killed Joseph Smith, including the governor and militia who were involved, Brigham Young said, "[if they] had come and had us to cut off their heads and let their blood be shed on the ground to atone for their sin. The nation might have redeemed themselves, if they had taken those murderers and spilt their blood, but they have held their peace."

In June 1853, President Young addressed a church conference complaining of Judge Brocchus, the Territorial judge appointed by the federal government who abandoned his position and returned to Washington to complain. "It is true, as it is said in the Report of these officers, if I had crooked my little finger, he would have been used up, but I did not bend it." He went on to caution "apostates, or men who never have made any profession of religion, had better be careful how they come here, lest I should bend my little finger."

He explained his right to remain head of state: "I have no fears whatever of Franklin Pierce excusing me from office, and saying that another man shall be the Governor of this territory." Referring to the history of Utah, he said that he told the original delegation "I will be Governor still, after you have done everything you possibly can do to prevent it." It was his right. God, and the Council of Fifty, had made him king. Therefore, "We have got a Territorial Government, and I am and will be Governor, and no power can hinder it, until the Lord Almighty says, 'Brigham, you need not be Governor any longer,' and then I am willing to yield[.]"

By 1856, Willard Richards had died (March 11, 1854) and was replaced by Jedediah M. Grant in the church's First Presidency. Brigham Young had been Governor for five years. Political conditions were complicated by increased criticism in the territory and the nation. Plural wives had not been welcomed. The kingdom was struggling. A new national political party was emerging whose popularity was driven by its opposition to both slavery and polygamy.

In addition to political and social differences, President Young was also confronted by natural disasters beginning in 1855. "The first major calamity was a grasshopper plague. On April 30, 1855 Brigham Young noted that 'grasshoppers have made their appearance and are doing extensive damage.'" A drought was underway, and the grasshopper plague added to crop losses. Food became scarce. "The drought was followed by a severe winter. In an effort to find more suitable grazing, it was decided to move many cattle, including more of the church herd, northward to Cache Valley. Biting snow and extreme cold soon proved this to be an unwise decision, and the loss in stock was extensive. Brigham estimated that two-thirds of all church stock had perished, while Wilford Woodruff recorded that only five hundred cattle remained from a herd of twenty-six hundred."

The entire kingdom was threatened. These disasters "in one year, wiped out the entire social surplus and placed the 35,000 persons in the territory in the same position of semistarvation in which the early Salt Lake colonists found themselves before the Gold Rush." How was the king to view a kingdom being rebuked by nature's God? Where was the blame to be placed? What was to be done?

Although there were two possible explanations, Brigham Young only considered one. He did not consider the leaders had brought this onto the kingdom. Instead, it was his subjects who had failed. What followed was a "Mormon Reformation" designed to "rekindle faith and testimony throughout the Church."

Here is a semi-official explanation for the controversy:

The era of the Reformation is often regarded as a controversial period. Some critics have claimed that Blood Atonement was practiced at this time. While President Young did preach that forgiveness for certain sins could come only through the sinner's shedding his blood, such comments reflect his style

more than his intent. Many of Brigham Young's utterances were rhetorical and designed to encourage (or even frighten) saints into gospel conformity. While publicly he threatened, privately he instructed Church leaders to forgive those who expressed sorrow for sin and repented.

Here is a contrary view by Polly Aird, which begins by quoting Peter McAuslan:

"With all their [the Mormons'] honesty, they have often been led to do wrong, even to the taking of the lives of their fellows. This I know by my experience in Utah. Two prominent instances of such you will remember when I mention the names of the places at which they occurred, Springville and Mountain Meadows."

George A. Hicks, to whom Peter reported in the Nauvoo Legion, wrote later that in this period "a spirit of secret murder stalked abroad among the people, and many of the 'undesirables' lost their lives by being murdered by unknown assassins, unknown so far as the general public were concerned." And Peter wrote, "I know from my experience in Mormonism that to give it [the church] the power it would rewrite the world's history with the blood of its inhabitants. This you may think is strong language but it is in accord with the spirit of the leaders of the Mormon Church when I was in Utah."

The first explanation is drawn largely from Mormon academics employed by the church. Their description relies on characterizations and subjective interpretation, and their sympathies are understandable. When choosing between these two opposing views, even though it is biting, the second appears more accurate. Polly Aird took statements from those who lived through the events. She is non-Mormon, but not anti-Mormon, and therefore can report what she thinks true without being accused of unfaithfulness. Faithful Mormons like me are often regarded as weak in the faith if both believing and candid. But human failure does not make any religion false. Governor Young's rhetoric, following the trials of 1855-56, put the blame for God's judgements onto the subjects of his kingdom. Something needed to be done to appease an angry Deity. Here are excerpts from his March 2, 1856 address, given as the kingdom was emerging from that difficult winter, facing starvation again in the early spring:

I will tell you what this people need, with regard to preaching; you need, figuratively, to have it rain pitchforks, tines downwards, from this pulpit, Sunday after Sunday. Instead of the smooth, beautiful, sweet, still, silk-velvet-lipped preaching, you should have sermons like peals of thunder, and perhaps we then can get the scales from our eyes. ...

I know the condition of this people, I know what induces them to do as they do, I know the secret springs to their actions, how they are beset, the temptations and evils that are around them,

and how liable they are to be drawn away, consequently, I tell you, brethren, that you need to have the thunders of the Almighty and the forked lightnings of truth sent upon you, to wake you up out of your lethargy. ...

The time is coming when justice will be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet; when we shall take the old broad sword and ask, "Are you for God?" and if you are not heartily on the Lord's side, you will be hewn down. I feel like reproving you; you are like a wild ass that rears and almost breaks his neck before he will be tamed. It is so with this people. ...

To understand how direful circumstances were at the time, fourteen days later Brigham Young advised members of his kingdom to go no more than five days without eating something.

His followers were severely suffering. He made the diagnosis and he prescribed the cure. Mormonism needed to be reformed with repentance strict enough to remove God's ire. Brigham Young intended to set that in motion using fiery rhetoric and, failing that, fiery enforcement. As to his status as kingdom leader, he was confident the hand of God upheld him. Therefore, any anger he provoked from the US government was inconsequential:

I shall be Governor as long as the Lord Almighty wishes me to govern this people. Do you suppose that it is in the power of any man to thwart the doings of the Almighty? They may as well undertake to blot out the sun. I am in the hands of that God, so is the President of our nation, and so are kings, and emperors, and all rulers. He controls the destiny of all, and what are you and I going to do about it? Let us submit to Him, that we may share in this invisible, almighty, God-like power, which is the everlasting Priesthood.

The subjects of the kingdom needed to be purged. If they were unwilling or unable to conform to the demands of righteousness, then they would need to be cut off like a dead branch. Clearing away dead branches would only benefit the remainder. The entire Utah legislature was re-baptized as an official act. The purpose of the Reformation was twofold: Either increase devotion to the kingdom or scare all disloyal subjects into fleeing. The Utah Legislature increased devotion. Hundreds fled.

By September 1856, Jedediah Grant was preaching "Reformation." In the Reformation, Brigham Young linked salvation and killing sinners together. Here is an excerpt from one of his earliest sermons on the subject.

There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if

they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground... I know, when you hear my brethren telling about cutting people off from the earth, that you consider it is strong doctrine; but it is to save them, not to destroy them.

I know that there are transgressors, who, if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, would beg of their brethren to shed their blood, that the smoke thereof might ascend to God as an offering to appease the wrath that is kindled against them, and that the law might have its course. I will say further; I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins.

The Encyclopedia of Mormonism states: "Many of Brigham Young's utterances were rhetorical and designed to encourage (or even frighten) Saints into gospel conformity." The recent book co-authored by assistant LDS Church historian Richard Turley states: "From [Brigham] Young's perspective, the reformation accomplished a great deal of good, though tough talk about blood atonement and dissenters must have helped create a climate of violence in the territory, especially among those who chose to take license from it." D. Michael Quinn observes: "Despite the suffering imposed by anti-Mormons on them, despite hearing repeated sermons about blood atonement, despite singing hymns of vengeance, despite receiving patriarchal blessings promising them the privilege of taking revenge on their enemies, the historical evidence indicates that most early Mormons avoided violence and were saddened by the news of such incidents." By the time changes in 1890 abandoned polygamy and made statehood at last possible, Mormonism reached a point of "abandonment of its violent culture and the beginning of its selective memory of a turbulent past." Paul H. Peterson explained, "[A]s the Reformation progressed, it became clear to the church leaders that not all would reform and that community purity would never become a reality until all polluting elements were removed. Thus, getting rid of incorrigibles came to be nearly as important as purifying those who were earnest in their desire to do better."

We will not understand the full implications of Brigham Young's kingship unless we are also willing to recognize the trends of his administration. If we accept his words, he believed sincerely in his kingship. If we accept his rhetoric at face value, he intended to either frighten his wayward subjects to repent or flee. Failing repentance or removal from the kingdom, he fully expected some to be killed. The question is left to each of us to decide how much or how little we will allow of Brigham Young to be taken at face value. In the Reformation, "[s]uccess could also be measured by the plans of a certain class of people to leave Utah in the spring. Brigham Young summarized these indications of successful reformation in January 1857: 'the reformation still continues ...Meetings are frequent and well attended. You may believe that it makes the 'Sinner in Zion afraid, and fearfulness seize the hypocrite, and we trust it will be too warm for such characters to remain in our midst.'"

The New York Times reported in August:

We have another arrival from Mormondom. An emigrant train, containing a large number of women and children – one hundred persons in all — has just reached this city [Lawrence, Kansas] ...The members of this company are, or rather were, professors of the Mormon faith, but they have fled from the holy land, partly to escape from the relentless tyranny of the Brigham Young oligarchy, and partly to improve their pecuniary affairs. When they left, there was great dissatisfaction among the Saints, and about a thousand persons abandoned Utah at the same time. Several trains departed for the States, and nearly four hundred started for Oregon. It was with difficulty that they escaped, and many threats were made that violence would be committed upon them if they attempted to leave the country. The large number of those who left is believed to have been their protection.

The exodus was deliberately provoked. The Reformation, including a twenty-seven question interrogation put to all the saints by inquisitorial Home Missionaries, included issues such as “betraying your brothers or sisters,” committing adultery, or shedding innocent blood. These three sins were grounds for blood atonement. The questions brought into the homes of every resident of the kingdom the reality that their unfaithfulness may not be viewed with continuing tolerance.

In his August 17, 1856 address he [Brigham Young] proclaimed how complete surrender must be: [Either] surrender and follow the kingdom and its leader, or leave it. But he warned: If you leave, you will ultimately be destroyed by God; completely annihilated:

The moment a person decides to leave this people, he is cut off from every object that is durable for time and eternity, and I have told you the reason why. Everything that is opposed to God and His Son Jesus Christ, to the celestial kingdom and to celestial laws, those celestial laws and beings will hold warfare with, until every particle of the opposite is turned back to its native element, though it should take millions and millions of ages to accomplish it. Christ will never cease the warfare, until he destroys death and him that hath the power of it. Every possession and object of affection will be taken from those who forsake the truth, and their identity will eventually cease.

Beginning in mid-November 1856 through April 1857, President Young forbade the entire church from receiving the sacrament. In October and November, the Willie and Martin Handcart disaster happened. On December 1, 1856 President Young’s fellow counselor and

Mormon Reformation advocate, Jedediah Grant, died prematurely at age 40. The second terrible winter not only claimed livestock but several Salt Lake homes collapsed under the weight of the snow. The roof of the Bowery on the temple block also gave way. These signs reconfirmed to Brigham Young the need for rigor within his kingdom. He added a new threat: “frequently giv[ing] warning that if the people did not reform, they would be left without their leaders and lose the higher (Melchizedek) priesthood.” To emphasize the threat, Brigham Young went into hiding for over a month.

Daniel H. Wells replaced Jedediah Grant in the First Presidency of the church. Wells was also the Lieutenant General leader of the Nauvoo Legion. Like Grant before him, his fidelity was to Brigham Young and the kingdom, not the United States. On February 8, 1857, President Young instructed his kingdom:

I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins. I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance (in the last resurrection there will be) if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil, until our elder brother Jesus Christ raises them up – conquers death, hell and the grave. 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. ... If you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind.

Two days prior to this talk, as he emerged from hiding, Governor Young issued letters on February 6, 1857 instructing violence be used to punish several targeted individuals known to have violated the law. One letter was addressed to three recipients, including stake president Isaac C. Haight at Cedar City. The letter stated:

Be on the lookout now, & have a few trusty men ready in the case of need to pursue, retake & punish. We do not suppose there would be any prosecutions for false imprisonment, or tale bearers for witnesses... Make no noise of this matter, & keep this letter safe. We write for your eye alone, & to men that can be trusted.

The letter resulted in the Santa Clara Ambush, which is the topic of Parshall’s article in *The Utah Historical Quarterly*. News of the ambush found its way into newspapers throughout the United States. Parshall explains:

The Santa Clara ambush was not what Brigham Young intended, in that it was not two backsliding felons who were attacked in the dark. But the ambush was the result of events he set in motion. He directed subordinates to take extra-legal action under specified conditions, knowing that innocents might suffer with the guilty because no “tale bearers” were to be spared. If he did not intend Dame and Haight to read his instructions as they have been interpreted here, that reading is justified by the indirect phrasing of his letters. If residents of southern Utah went beyond the mark in implementing his instructions, no effective chastisements occurred. All of the men to whom letters were sent retained their church, civil and military positions as though nothing untoward happened. But something had happened, with repercussions beyond the injuries and losses to Tobin and his companions. News of the attack spread quickly through the nation, heightening tensions on the eve of the Utah War. When the wounded victims were carried to San Bernadino, rumors flared that endangered the lives of Mormons living there. Lack of accountability following the Santa Clara ambush did nothing to allay a local impression that violence was a suitable response to a perceived threat, an impression, which seemingly played a role at Mountain Meadows later that year. Most chilling to contemplate, survival of the Santa Clara victims and their public exposure of the attack may have strengthened a determination at Mountain Meadows to spare no competent witness.

The Santa Clara ambush included unintended victims. It may have been beyond the intent of Brigham Young when he wrote the instructions. However, Parshall’s explanation is inadequate. If Brigham Young wrote the letter as a king, heading both church and state, then the process was not “extra-legal” at all. It was a sovereign’s right to issue the letter to impose order. As 1857 continued, the king’s ire spread from “reigning pitchforks” from the podium, to the fruit of his rhetoric which cost lives. After Santa Clara the violence spread. As it spread, neither the church nor the state over which Brigham Young presided displayed any inclination to hold a single person accountable for the deaths. Beyond that, there was no curiosity to identify those involved. Parshall describes the events of that turbulent year:

Failure to hold anyone responsible for the Santa Clara ambush foreshadowed the silence to follow the Potter-Parish murders in Springville the next month, the massacre at Mountain Meadows in September, the October bludgeoning death of Richard Yates in Echo Canyon, the murders of the Aiken party near Nephi in November – a catalog of bloodshed without accountability in the surreal year of 1857.

The United States was buzzing with alarm. The Utah Territorial Legislature issued a proclamation claiming the Territory's law was superior to Federal Law. New First Presidency member and commander of the Nauvoo Legion, Daniel Wells, issued General Order 1 at the beginning of April. This order was "notifying Nauvoo Legion members that they now belonged to the armed forces of God's Kingdom." "President Buchanan in late May decided to unseat [Brigham Young] as governor and ordered the US Army to escort his successor to Great Salt Lake to restore federal authority in Utah." Given Brigham Young's widely reported refusal to surrender the governorship unless "God Almighty" would tell him to submit, President Buchanan concluded the US Army was necessary to install a new governor. This has been called The Utah War, or The Mormon Rebellion.

The Utah War has been characterized as a "bloodless" event. Recent scholarship has revisited the war, and at least one scholar changed his view from being "bloodless" to being quite bloody. His revised view is now:

Overlooked or intentionally excluded from these views is the Mountain Meadows Massacre as a wartime engagement on September 11, 1857. It was an atrocity in which a detachment of the Utah territorial militia (Nauvoo Legion) supported by Indian auxiliaries executed about 120 disarmed men, women and children, the largest organized mass murder of white civilians in American history until the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

That author goes on to conclude that the Utah War rivaled "Bleeding Kansas" in fatalities. A recent description by [an] LDS Church assistant historian explains it this way:

Scholars who have investigated violence in many cultures provide other insights based on group psychology. Episodes of violence often begin when one people classify another as "the other," stripping them of any humanity and mentally transforming them into enemies. Once this process of devaluing and demonizing occurs, stereotypes take over, rumors circulate, and pressure builds to conform to group action against the perceived threat. Those classified as the enemy are often seen as the transgressors, even as steps are being taken against them. When these tinderbox conditions exist, a single incident, small or ordinary in usual circumstances, may spark great violence ending in atrocity. The literature suggests other elements are often present when "good people" do terrible things. Usually there is an atmosphere of authority and obedience, which allows errant leaders to trump the moral instincts of their followers. Atrocities also occur when followers do not have clear

messages about what is expected of them — when their culture or message from headquarters leave local leaders wondering what they should do. Poverty increases the likelihood of problems by raising concerns about survival. The conditions for mass killing — demonizing, authority, obedience, peer pressure, ambiguity, fear, and deprivation — all were present in southern Utah in 1857.

Of these conditions, Brigham Young's leadership supplied the demonizing, authority, obedience, peer pressure, ambiguity and fear. He said his purpose was to create this very environment. Brigham Young's own son would characterize the Reformation as "a reign of terror." One woman who lived through that time reflected: "it was a fearful ordeal, and fear is a slavish passion and is not begotten by the Spirit of God!"

Brigham Young declared he understood exactly how to govern to accomplish what was needed. He explained how few men were qualified, as he was, to accomplish what he wanted:

There are but few men who know how to govern in temporal things, fewer still who know how to control the feelings of the people, how to guide the power of any kingdom that was ever organized on the earth. Nations and kingdoms of this world rise up and flourish only for a season. What is the difficulty? They contain the seeds of their own destruction, sown therein by the framers of human governments; those combusive elements are organized in their constitution from the first. ...Why are they thus led to sow the seeds of their own destruction? Because the kingdoms of this world are not designed to stand. When men are placed at the head of government who are not actually controlled by the power of God by the Holy Ghost they can lay plans, they can frame constitutions, they can form governments and laws that have not the seeds of death within them, and no other men can do it.

If we take him at his word, then the deathly harvest of 1857 was what he hoped to accomplish. There is another rhetorical milestone immediately prior to the Mountain Meadows Massacre. In August 1857, Governor Young knew the Army had been dispatched to install a new governor. He learned on the 11th that the Army had arrived 118 miles below Laramie. On the 16th he gave a talk about the Army, his intent to fight them, and the direful results the nation should expect if they persisted in moving forward into combat with the kingdom. Only 26 days prior to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, Governor Young warned the United States:

Now if the United States send an army here and commences war on us, their travel across this country must stop; their

train cannot cross. To accomplish this I need only say to them for the Indians will use them up; and they will do it. ...I warn them and fore warn the United States, that if they commence war upon us, they need not expect me to hold the Indians while they shoot them. ... Had it not been for the "Mormons" in these mountains, nineteen out of twenty of this seasons emigration would have been cut off by the Indians. Had it not for our settlements here, overland emigration would have been stopped years ago, and yet they turn around and condemn me and this people for conniving with the Indians. This people have always done good to the travelers; they have kept the Indians from injuring them and have done all in their power to save the lives of men, women and children, but all this will cease to be, if our enemies commence war upon us.

Twenty-six days later a Mormon-led attack killed over one-hundred twenty men, women and children. The slaughter was both staged to look Indian caused, and reported as an Indian attack; as if the event was quick proof of the Governor's warning about the perilous boast of waging war against his kingdom. The proximity of the talk and the attack appeared to be swift vindication, but did not deter the United States' determination to remove Governor Young. As the Army approached, Governor Young warned not only that Indian uprisings afflict the United States, but God would also come out of His hiding place and fight for the kingdom. He predicted a spectacular defeat, with the unseen "soldiers of the Lord" defending the kingdom. The threatened war made Governor Young pleased at the prospects of the kingdom defeating the coming Army. He proclaimed:

I do not know that I have ever felt better in my life, more satisfied, more rejoicing in my heart, or had more of the testimony and witness of the Spirit within, than when I have said, You Latter day Saints may be driven to move, if you will take your own part, and "I the Lord your God am with you, and I will help you and I will fight your battles." It is rather a bold statement; it is rather a bold step for a handful of men here in the mountains to think that they can cope with the extensive government, the government of the United States, the powerful kingdoms of darkness. Upon natural principles we cannot, but we can fight them in the name of, God Almighty, and with his aid we can keep them off from us.

He warned them [the United States] not to come because they risked utter defeat. The whole world was watching the conflict, making God's Kingdom renown. The outcome of this conflict was certain. Brigham Young asked, "Cannot this kingdom be overthrown? No. They might as well try to obliterate the sun." It was not the kingdom Brigham Young led that was vulnerable, but the United States which was at peril and about to be destroyed by

God. The destruction of the US Army was, according to Governor Young, part of God's design to acquire a respected name and a fearful character again in this world.

As King Brigham preached to the Utah Legislature during the winter of 1857, the US Army was quartered down for winter still hundreds of hard miles away. He said his kingdom was not only going to win the conflict, but the triumph would lead to control over all nations by God's kingdom:

The Lord should reign and rule over us in all our business transactions The Kingdom of God is one thing, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is another, yet it is one, and when the Kingdom of God is set up upon the earth it will be a temporal Kingdom, and that is the Kingdom Jesus referred to, and which his saints would fight for. The Kingdom of God is a temporal Kingdom and the Church of Jesus Christ is His Church and Kingdom. The Kingdom of God will enact laws that will govern and control all people whether Saint or sinner, whether they worship God, the Sun, Moon or Stars. The Law that will issue forth, from Zion will control the nations of the Earth, and give to each one his rights in the free exercise and enjoyment of his[.] ...Here is the Kingdom of God in embryo, which will enact laws for the Government of all people, nations, kindreds and tongues upon the face of the whole earth, and in our deliberations our eyes should be single to this point, that this doctrine has been preached and acted upon, and the Kingdom of God was organized in the days of Joseph [Smith], and was called the council of Fifty, and that was the commencement for to issue forth laws for the nations of the earth.

But no higher authority rallied the Indians, nor came out from His hiding place to destroy the US Army, nor caused unseen soldiers to slay US forces. Instead, the Army came and Brigham Young negotiated an end to his earthly rule over the Utah Territory. He served a total of seven years, although appointed only for four because the act allowed him to continue "until his successor shall be appointed and qualified, unless sooner removed by the President of the United States." Governor Cumming peacefully assumed office in April of 1858.

A Telestial Kingship

Mormonism may have ended at the death of Joseph Smith if not for Brigham Young. Because he acted decisively, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints remains a body of believers, perpetuating the structure established through Joseph. Mormonism was preserved in structure, but altered in content by Brigham Young. History has acknowledged his great contribution in preserving the faith, but it has not adequately acknowledged how greatly he changed its content and practice.

Almost every religion has some doctrine beyond man's capacity to implement. Catholicism doubted man's ability to live the Sermon on the Mount for over a thousand years until Saint Francis accomplished it. Few have repeated his achievement. Nevertheless, the ideal remains firmly a part of Catholicism with Saint Francis a symbol of that ideal.

Kingship is perhaps both the greatest concept and worst temptation in Mormon theology. Its difficulty is on public display in the governorship of Brigham Young. He is a cautionary tale for us about the greatest challenge faced by faithful Mormons who hope to be sons of God and joint-heirs with His Son.

John Locke wrote in his Second Treatise of Civil Government that “all princes and rulers of independent governments all throughout the world, are in a state of nature[.]” Brigham Young as God’s earthly head of an independent kingdom conformed his conduct to that view. Therefore, as John Locke would expect, his behavior was like man “in a state of nature” where he had the right to “restrain, or where it is necessary, destroy things noxious to [him].” Locke’s description is apt.

If, during Brigham Young’s lifetime, America viewed Mormonism as one of the “twin relics of barbarism,” like the Republican platform Abraham Lincoln ran on described it, subsequent events domesticated Mormonism. Mormonism went from being a Great Basin monarchy to becoming an uber American, flag-waving, rock-solid red state on the most conservative side of the ledger at present. Both the state and church Brigham Young led have become ‘house-broken’ to Americanism. This years’ Presidential election reflects the long road Governor Young’s people have travelled.

The explanation for violence in Utah during the tenure of Governor Young is usually stated in these terms: “the point here is not to claim that no vigilante crimes by angry Mormons protecting their interests ever occurred in territorial Utah. The point is that over attention to such activities obscures the fact that they were very rare compared to elsewhere in the West, where no concerted effort to undermine a popularly supported government was going on as in Utah.” This measure concedes too much. It presumes to compare God’s kingdom to how others in this world behave; or in Mormon vocabulary, the standard is Telestial.

When Christ spoke of His kingdom, He declared it was “not of this world.” The inspiration for Brigham Young’s ambition to be king came from Joseph Smith and the Council of Fifty. But Joseph Smith surrendered his own life, “as a lamb to the slaughter” even when he had the largest militia in Illinois, the Nauvoo Legion, at his command to prevent his arrest. Christ was killed, Joseph Smith was killed, and both claimed an otherworldly kingship.

The form of kingship is approved in the Book of Mormon. In this form the king is servant, and not a master. This form of king is in God’s service while kneeling and laboring to serve others, without boasting and without imposing grievous burdens. In other words, the Book of Mormon approves a Celestial kingship, which serves through self-sacrifice and meek example as the model of leadership, but utterly rejects control, compulsion and dominion by an earthly king. Hence the sad observation made by Joseph Smith that it is the nature of almost all men as soon as they have a little authority to begin to exercise unrighteous dominion over others.

Mormon apologists do not apply a Celestial standard for the Reformation. Nor do they use the Book of Mormon to measure Governor Young. Consistently, they compare the kingdom's conduct to gentiles elsewhere in the West. By that standard, Governor Young presided over a violent Telestial Kingdom and measured only an above average grade in the number of killings. In the end, whether you are sympathetic, dispassionate, or critical of this era of Mormon history, all writers, Mormon and non-Mormon alike, concede it was a Telestial Kingdom over which Governor Young reigned. By that standard he did well enough. However, is it enough to say he could have been responsible for more deaths if he had been brutal? Is Mormonism to be measured against its highest ideals, or instead it's better-than-average performance? If we use the steep incline in the number of killings beginning in 1857 as a trend, then the fruit of the Mormon Reformation was an ominous harvest. Had the US government not intervened to remove Governor Young in 1858, the trend suggests something even more dreadful was coming.

For President Young, in the absence of the Lord appearing "and personally dictat[ing to him] in the management of the people," hearing "the voice of Almighty God" was a matter of common sense. He told the kingdom, after learning that President Buchanan had ordered the Army to go to Utah, how he was able to conduct the kingdom's affairs: "I am not going to interpret dreams; for I don't profess to be such a Prophet as were Joseph Smith and Daniel; but I am a Yankee guesser[.]" From our vantage point, we can question why he did not hear God's voice in the early death of Willard Richards, nor in the drought, grasshopper swarms, crop failures, bitter winters, livestock deaths, buildings collapsing under the weight of unusually heavy winter snows – including the church's Bowery, in the handcart company disasters, premature death of Jedediah Grant, nor in his own life-threatening illness in February 1857. God's voice throughout those difficulties only said to the Yankee guesser that God condemned the subjects of the kingdom for their lack of fidelity to the earthly king's righteous leadership.

The Book of Mormon promises the American continent was to remain a place of liberty. This land is not for kings and kingdoms. The gentile occupants are warned to never establish a king here, or they would be cursed. The collision between Brigham Young and the United States could be interpreted, using the Book of Mormon's teachings, as a conflict between God's decree against a kingship and Governor Young's insistence upon it. In that sense, the arrival of the Army to remove Governor Young was, at last, the voice of God Almighty, relieving Brigham Young of his kingship.

Brigham Young faced greater challenges than we do. We can no more view ourselves living in antebellum America than we can view ourselves in the shoes of Brigham Young. Therefore, even if we think we can understand him, we should hesitate to judge him. That judgment remains best left to God. The most we ought to offer is gratitude we were not given his responsibilities because that would expose to public view and history's memory our own assortment of human failure. Governor and President Brigham Young was a colonizer, leader, religious symbol, and American icon. He rightly deserves a place in American and Mormon history, even if some of the praise and criticism given him is both too little and too much.

Thank you.

[1:01:27] Introduction of Thomas G. Alexander

[1:04:08] Thomas G. Alexander: Actually, I would consider this a comment rather than a rebuttal. These will be things that I'll be dealing with. In considering Denver's paper I will frequently refer to the ideal of the expected and the actual of, an approach that was suggested by Robert Burkholder.

Denver argues that the Counsel of Fifty operated the government in Utah with Brigham Young. This may have been the ideal but it wasn't the actual. He cites Mike Quinn's excellent article but Mike points out that most of the time the Counsel of Fifty didn't operate at all. Rather, Quinn points out, "it symbolizes (and I'm quoting) the other worldly world order that would be established during the Millennial reign of Christ on earth." Mike says that after the initial flurry of activity from 1848 to 1850 in Utah, the Counsel of Fifty was a virtual relic during the remainder of Brigham Young's leadership. When it functioned, the Counsel was a rubber-stamp for the First Presidency and Twelve, who actually provided continuous leadership for the Mormons in religious, economic, political, and social matters.

Brigham Young outlined the ideal when he explained that the Constitution of the government of the kingdom of God. He called it both a republican theocracy and a true democratic theocracy. Young argued that the kingdom of God would "differ but little in form from our national, state, and territorial governments but its subjects will recognize the will and dictation of the Almighty. Everyone," Young says, "will be free to exercise religious and other civil rights that they should have been able to exercise under the Constitution."

In 1855 he said that the kingdom of god was not fully organized. In 1856 he said we've got to be rightly prepared to go to the spirit world in order to become kings. In 1863, in speaking to the shadow government of the State of Deseret, he used the future tense: "We are called the state legislature but when the time comes we shall be called the kingdom of god." In a sermon in 1866 he spoke of the kingdom of god as in the future.

Now, some of his sermons are inconsistent. In 1861 he said that Joseph Smith had organized the kingdom of god as prophesied by Daniel. In 1857 he spoke about the kingdom of god as being on the earth. In trying to reconcile these inconsistencies, it seems to me that the term "kingdom of god" as it relates to the organization on our telestial earth, was an ideal, symbolically embodied in the church. In the future however, he expected that it would be an actual organization governed by God and Christ. This is consistent with his view of kingship. In a sermon in June 1866 he said, "This kingdom is governed and control[l]ed by him who knows all things; and he will bring forth the righteous, the just, the humble and the meek of the earth, all those who serve him and keep his commandments to the enjoyment of the fulness of his glory." In 1874, in promoting the United Order, he

announced an uncannonized revelation from God, he called on the people to join the United Orders for the furtherance of God's Kingdom on earth.

Assertions that Young considered himself a king occur frequently in Denver's paper. For instance, the author inserts the words "priest and king" when he certainly makes clear that Young is speaking about God's own kingdom on earth, not Brigham Young's kingship. The general rule historians follow is to give evidence. Frankly, I've searched Brigham Young's sermons in vain for any place where he referred to himself as a king. Rather, he said, "the Lord Jehovah is my king and instructor." Moreover, the portions of Section 132 of the Doctrine & Covenants that Denver quotes, especially verses 19 and 20, refer to future conditions after the resurrection, not the condition on this Telestial earth.

The way Brigham Young functioned in this world is best understood as a territorial governor and church president rather than as a king. In fact, I would argue that in every place in his [Denver] paper where the word "king" appears in reference to Brigham Young, except where it is used symbolically it should be replaced by terms like president, governor, or prophet, depending on the context. Denver's discussion of the Book of Mormon is interesting in the ideal but it bears little relationship to the actual. In actuality, as governor and church president, Brigham Young made executive decisions in counsel with his close associates, generally members of the First Presidency and Counsel of the Twelve. These were similar to president's cabinet meetings and Andrew Jackson's kitchen cabinet.

The saints established a provisional government of the State of Deseret and applied for admission to the Union. The leaders drafted a constitution as Peter Crawley has shown, without a convention. Brigham Young and his advisors clearly decided to hurry things along, and they held elections in a public meeting two days after the convention. We should note that such voting was not unusual in the 19th century and secret ballots were unknown until 1888. In 1888 Massachusetts was the first state to adopt the secret ballot. Kentucky was the last in 1891. Previously, states used systems where people announced their votes at the polls or parties drafted their own ballots.

The Mormons lived in what Joseph Smith called a theodemocracy. The First Presidency and Twelve acted under God's direction. God, not Brigham Young, was the king. Given the insignificant role of the Counsel of Fifty and the general perception that God governed the kingdom, I would argue that the crowning of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor was symbolic, that is an ideal rather than actual. Denver acknowledges that Joseph Smith's kingship was entirely theologic, private, and non governmental. In fact all three – Smith, Young, and Taylor – functioned as prophets, seers, and revelators rather than as kings.

With regard to relinquishing power Brigham Young says, as Denver indicated, that he would serve as governor, again not as king, and "no power can hinder it, until the Almighty says, 'Brigham, you need not be governor any longer,' and then I am willing to yield to another governor." He offered on at least two occasions to yield his governorship voluntarily. He volunteered to relinquish the governorship to Edward Steptoe in 1854

when he thought that President Franklin Pierce would appoint him as governor, and Steptoe declined the appointment. He actually relinquished his authority to Alfred Cumming in March 1858, when Thomas L. Kane brought him to Salt Lake City. Cumming said everywhere that he was greeted as governor when he came.

Significantly, the Army did not force Cumming on Brigham Young and the people of Utah. The army was still bivouacked at Fort Bridger when Cumming arrived in Salt Lake City. Since Brigham Young relinquished the governorship before the army arrived we should analyze the installation of Alfred Cumming and the dispatch of the Army as separate issues. We need to understand that the Mormon people, not just the leaders, feared the advancing Army because they had experienced state run armies in Missouri, and organized armies functioning outside of the authority of the state in Illinois. My own great-great-grandfather and his family lost property in their expulsion from Missouri and Nauvoo. Numerous Mormons died in Missouri and Illinois, either killed by the Army or by weather and starvation.

As the army advanced on Utah the people heard stories of the soldiers threatening to murder them. The Mormons used violence to hinder the Army's advance and many abandoned Salt Lake City and moved to Provo in a very expansive venture. They wanted to stop the advance of the Army and they wanted assurance that the soldiers would not molest them. President James Buchanan's Peace Commission offered both amnesty and promises about the role of the Army. Brigham Young said that he accepted the amnesty even though he believed that he had done nothing to deserve it.

Utah was not in rebellion against the United States. Rather, the people of Utah wanted to avoid a murderous army, and instead to secure admission as a state into the Union. They did not want to escape the Union. Here we can separate their ideal, which was the kingdom of god on earth, from the expected, which was formal admission into the Union. Because of their theodemocracy and the practice of polygamy the actual was continued territorial status. In failed attempts they drafted constitutions and applied for statehood in 1849 and in 1856 while Brigham Young was governor. The territorial legislature also sent a number of memorials during the same period asking for admission as a state. Afterward they applied in vain four more times before they finally achieved admission in 1896.

While we acknowledge the Mormon theodemocracy we also need to understand the 19th century United States was a Protestant theodemocracy. Ernest (Tuckson?) argues that the United States owes more to the Protestant Reformation than to the enlightenment. On this subject I suggest Edward Digby Baltzell's books. Baltzell argues rightly, I believe, that in the 19th century "this class of Protestant patricians not only held the vast majority of positions at the very heart of the national power but also set styles in the arts and letters, in universities, in sports, and in the more popular culture which governs the aspirations and values of the masses." You may remember that when Methodist layman James B. McKean came to Utah in 1870 as chief justice of the territorial Supreme Court, he made it clear that he believed that God had sent him on a mission to Utah.

President Ulysses S. Grant turned over the operation of most of the Indian reservations in the United States and territories to religious organizations. He even included some Catholics but he excluded the Mormons. A number of states had established churches in the early American republic. Until the adoption of the 14th amendment, the provision of the US Constitution prohibiting establishment did not apply to the states. Connecticut had established a congregational church until 1819, and Massachusetts did so until 1833. Until the 20th century atheists couldn't hold office in eight states. In 1961 the Supreme Court ruled in *Torcaso vs Watkins* that the prohibitions prohibiting atheists from holding office in those states were invalid religious establishments. Beyond this, to argue that churches have nothing to do with secular matters and that these are another matter altogether, simply ignores the historic function of churches. Even today many Protestant and Catholic religious leaders continue to dictate political decisions to their congregations.

Regardless of the ideal laid out in Section 134 of the Doctrine and Covenants, as an actual matter, churches have always involved themselves in state affairs. Religious leaders give advice to members, to governments, and pressure both on all sorts of secular matters. Religious pressure often induces members of churches to support or oppose political candidates, secular issues of importance, and even questions of life and death. In the Mormon theodemocracy, the church leadership decided who should run for political offices and the memberships sustained them. Between 1870 and 1891 the LDS Church sponsored the People's Party and the membership generally voted to support the people's party line. As Denver indicates, the LDS Church did not separate the temporal and spiritual but neither did contemporary Protestants. In actual practice, most people opposed religious interference in secular affairs unless it is in behalf of issues that they support. For instance, what would have happened to the civil rights movement in the United States if the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. had not spoken out and acted so forcefully as a religious leader? Right now the Catholic clergy are resisting the inclusion of birth control in medical plans for their employees.

Now let me turn to the Reformation. As Denver points out, Brigham Young favored the death penalty. Well, this isn't unusual. Thirty-seven states have the death penalty today. What is outrageous, however, is that Young's ideal was that private organizations and individuals should exercise the death penalty. I would be the first to agree that both general authorities and members made many serious mistakes during the Reformation. Significantly, the General Authorities today recognize that even Church leaders can make mistakes. In his April 2012 sermon, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, "We consume such precious emotional and spiritual capital clinging tenaciously to the memory of...an incident in Church history that proved no more or less than that mortals will always struggle to measure up to the immortal hopes placed before them."

It seems clear that Brigham Young's ideal was that if people were righteous God would bless and protect them. Instead of measuring the actual by the expected, Brigham Young measured the actual by this ideal. Since Utah experienced grasshopper plagues and a drought, and harsh winters, he concluded that they must be unrighteous. As leaders tried to

determine the level of the righteousness we can understand why home missionaries and block teachers asked the questions that they did.

What is impossible to understand, especially given the Book of Mormon doctrine that Christ's atonement is infinite, is the doctrine of blood atonement. In 1899 the First Presidency and Twelve repudiated blood atonement in an official declaration called "The Manifesto of the Apostles". Nevertheless, whether we perceive Brigham Young's sermons about blood atonement as ideal rhetoric or actual expectation, they are unacceptable as Church doctrine and practice. Unfortunately, the sermons may have had actual consequences. His sermons may well have influenced the decision of Bishop Aaron Johnson of Springville to order the murders of William and Beason Parish. Some historians have wrongly concluded that Young sent a letter to Johnson ordering the murders. (?) Marshall found the letter that Young actually sent and it has nothing to do with the Parishes. Young did not order those murders.

This brings us to the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Given the available evidence it seems unlikely that Brigham Young ordered the massacre. It has always amazed me that authors could blame Brigham Young for ordering the massacre when Laban Morrell and others on the Cedar City High Counsel refused to go along with Stake President Isaac Haight's plans. They made him agree to send James Haslam north to ask Brigham Young whether they should punish the immigrants. If Brigham Young had ordered the massacre, and he held as much power as critics say he did, why didn't President Haight simply tell the High Council members to get into line? Instead, Haight worked behind their backs to make sure that the murders took place. He'd already sent John D. Lee out to begin the raid without informing them, and even after he agreed to send Haslam north he didn't recall Lee. Later in the week he induced militia commander and Parowan Stake President William Dame to authorize the massacre, in spite of the fact that the Parowan Stake High Council had forbid it. Stake President Isaac Haight, not Brigham Young, bears the immediate responsibility for the massacre through his deceitful actions and orders.

Historically we expect that some people in any organization will consider themselves more orthodox than the prophet and will act in ways that damage the organization as Haight's actions did. In fact, as (Jeffrey N.) Walker (et. al.) have shown the immediate causes of the massacre were local disputes. We understand, however, that the caution of Elder George A. Smith to prepare for possible conflict may have contributed indirectly. If so, Brigham Young may also have contributed indirectly by sending Smith south to warn the saints to prepare for war. Significantly, conflicts took place in Utah Valley and in other places as the Baker-Fancher party came south. Smith had warned others also about the possible war but their actions did not lead to massacres and the conflicts in Cedar City should not have lead to a massacre either. Responsibility for this massacre lies with Stake President Isaac Haight, not Brigham Young. Thank you.

[1:25:40] Moderator: I would like to ask first Brother Snuffer, perhaps, if he would like to comment or respond to comments presented by Brother Alexander, if that changes in any way his opinions or conclusions as to Brigham Young's kingship assertion.

Denver: I would say no, because all of the instances he gave in which Brigham Young was back walking the concept of kingship were posed in 1860, 1861, 1865, 1867, 1870. These are after he's been deposed as governor.

Thomas: All of them are.

Denver: All of the dates that I recall hearing were deposing him. In fact, the title of the talk is based upon the mixture of church and state from 1851 to 1858. Therefore, anything that happened, that was learned as a consequence of being deposed by the arrival of the Army, which was the only reason why Governor Cumming was treated as he was... There's another narrative but it doesn't appear in this talk because I was limited in the amount of time that I could take.

In 1847 when they arrived in the valley, Brigham Young said, "If they'll give us ten years of peace I will ask no odds of the government." If they give me ten years I ask no odds of them. In 1857, which was ten years hence, when the army was sent out to put in a new governor, Brigham Young repeated that: "I said if they gave me ten years I would ask no odds of them." Brigham Young fully intended to remain in charge of the government and his dialogue suggests that. The comments that get made post governorship, post resignation, informed Brigham Young by the course of history, the Yankee guesser could guess something as a consequence of that, that informed him. My view of his status as king runs from 1851 to 1857 and is derived from the things and the views that were held in that time period. In fact, a great deal changed in Brigham Young's mind after 1858.

Brigham Young was of the view, for example, the closer that they got to the establishment of an actual functioning temple, the closer Brigham Young came to the realization that part of what Joseph was doing in Nauvoo was beyond their grasp. They needed to have answers to questions in the temple that he didn't have answers to. His solution to that was the expectation that the resurrected Joseph Smith would come and deliver what was missing because the return of Joseph Smith as a resurrected person, with Jesus in the clouds of glory, was an expectation that Brigham Young held for his own lifetime. The closer he got to his death in the 1870s the more he modified that view as well. The idea that the kingdom would go on post his lifetime was an idea that didn't service what he was talking about early in life. It didn't answer to the question of the dilemmas that it was faced early in life, just as his views changed when he was no longer governor.

I readily agree that the Counsel of Fifty turned into something far more symbolic but the power, the influence, the keys, the status, the concept aright, and the authorization to establish it, derived wholly from the Counsel of Fifty. But just as Brigham Young became disenchanted with sharing leadership with the Quorum of the Twelve, after the successful campaign and vote in August of 1844 he determined he needed to be elected to be church president in 1847. Now, this was a move that was opposed by John Taylor, that was opposed by Parley Pratt, and Wilford Woodruff suggested to him he ought not do that in the absence of a revelation. Brigham Young spent a couple of days arguing with Wilford

Woodruff over whether you can elect a church president in the absence of a revelation authorizing it. Ultimately the vote was held and Wilford Woodruff stood down from the argument, and he was elected, at which point one of his first comments was, "I can't wait to get back to Salt Lake and have John Taylor and Parley Pratt confess they're not Brigham Young."

Well, the ideal at the moment of the election in August 1844 was that the Quorum of the Twelve was going to run the church. But the practical implementation of that was that Brigham Young did not do well with opposition in order to garner a consensus; that was more difficult. Therefore, the Twelve became a source of frustration to him and he wanted a First Presidency because then he could confine the debate to three instead of twelve, and he succeeded in getting elected, and he succeeded in organizing the presidency, and he succeeded in establishing a precedent. But you must not confuse what Brigham Young would learn through sad experience after being deposed, with what he said he meant during the time that he was reigning as the governor.

[1:31:00] Q&A: We are out of time and we wanted to take questions, and there is another group following us at 3 o'clock. Does anyone have a question for either Brother Alexander or me that we can answer briefly?

Question 1: Why wasn't the name of John D. Lee ever mentioned in either discussion of the Mountain Meadow Massacre (cross talk).

Denver: Today, in this talk? This talk is an excerpt from a paper. This is about one-third of the paper, and I intend to release the paper on my blog. I wanted to hear the comments today before I clarify a few things, and I do intend to clarify. But the focus is not upon what Brigham Young learned as a consequence of these incidents, but that the focus was upon what was going on in real time at the time, and John D. Lee's name is in there, and it's in there more than once. You can read that. The paper will come out on the blog.

Question 2: You mentioned a Santa Clara Massacre. How many people were killed?

Denver: At the Santa Clara ambush no one was killed. There was an attempt to kill them. There were four victims that were involved with that. One of them was a relatively faithful member of the Church, I think he got shot in the nose and he was taken down to San Bernardino. He survived, and he lived through it all. He was a faithful member of the Church but the whole ambush left a bad taste. You've got to understand, Utah was big news back in those days, so all of the stuff that went on found its way to the national press. Impressions matter more than reality, particularly when these events were unfolding in Utah.

Brigham Young's own rhetoric is, in part, responsible, for what happened to him being removed as governor. He just said some very inflammatory things. I think he believed the church and kingdom were going to be delivered by God, and when it didn't happen, he learned from that. He went to school on it, and he adapted his understanding as a

consequence of that. He would make statements later in light of what he learned from that. Just like I think the Black Hawk War was another bit of tuition in the education of Brigham Young, in which he envisioned, as a result or as a consequence of the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants prophecies about the Lamanites. The Lamanites are not supposed to go to war against the kingdom. The Lamanites were supposed to join in and protect the kingdom. The Black Hawk War taught Brigham Young something that he didn't know before that.

Brigham Young was a work in process, but the focus of my talk was the work of Brigham Young and the status that came from 1851 to 1858, not that he may have matured into it at a later time.

Thank you very much.

[End transcription]

[Transcription by Kiyoko Ball, v2.0]