

Davis County Ex-Mormon meetup Sunday Feb 22, 2026, 10:30 AM

[All links from Invitations](#). (378 Members)

How to Find us: Sunday Feb 22, 2026 meetup is 10:30 AM at Smiths Marketplace, 1370 W 200 N, Kaysville, UT 84037. Entering Smith's turn right, take the up staircase on the right side of Starbucks, turn right on the 2nd floor at the top of the stairs, take 10 strides passing the lockers to the conference room entrance on the right. **Contact:** Francis 'Nelson' Henderson, 858-668-6943, francisnh12@gmail.com

Our purposes: First, when leaving Mormonism, people often find that they no longer have community or support. Our goal is to provide support for each other and to build community. So, whether you are a member, or left the church recently, or have been out for years, or were never Mormon but are looking for community, come and socialize with us and share your story.

Secondly, we uncover the fallacies, deception, and misinformation employed by the LDS Church to gain control over our lives.



[“The Grand Deception”](#) Art Carpenter’s new comparison, line-by-line, teachings of the King James Version of the New Testament against LDS doctrines.” Note: Art’s work is always found here: [All links from Invitations Full Exit Statement](#) of Francis ‘Nelson’ Henderson

Invitation: [Corporate PR vs. Moral Obligations of a Church](#)

The Mountain Meadows Massacre (MMM) offers a striking case study in how the LDS Church has long sought to shape, limit, or control the historical record. John D. Lee’s defense attorney was William W. Bishop. Following Lee’s conviction for his role in the massacre, Bishop persuaded Lee to give his account of the Massacre. Lee ran out of time before his execution; therefore, Lee dictated to Bishop who departed Utah carrying Lee’s confession. In 1877, Bishop published it as [Mormonism Unveiled; Or the Life and Confession of John D. Lee](#), a work that remains one of the most candid and detailed firsthand accounts from a massacre participant.

Bishop’s decision to publish outside Utah was significant: it ensured that Lee’s unfiltered testimony reached a national audience, bypassing the institutional gatekeeping that so often characterized the Church’s handling of sensitive history. The book’s frank depictions of complicity, both individual and collective, stood in stark contrast to the carefully curated public narrative offered by Church leaders like Apostle Charles W. Penrose¹ or Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith² who consistently downplayed leadership involvement while framing the massacre as the work of rogue local actors.

In this way, Bishop’s publication served as an early example of how independent accounts could pierce the Church’s protective historical shell, revealing uncomfortable truths that might otherwise have been suppressed or quietly rewritten. This pattern of narrative control, evident in 19th-century Utah, remains visible today in the

¹ Juanita Brooks, [The Mountain Meadows Massacre](#), New Edition 1962, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, ISBN: 0-8061-0549-6, 216 -7

² Joseph Fielding Smith, [Essentials in Church History](#), Deseret Book Co for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 19th Edition, 1964, 513

Church's selective disclosures, Gospel Topics Essays, and public relations strategies, where only as much truth as is institutionally expedient is admitted.³

The MMM was the extreme consequence of a culture where obedience to Church leaders is elevated above individual conscience. But the lessons of Mountain Meadows have not been learned by the institution. In the modern era, the Church's official historical work continues to avoid asking how obedience becomes weaponized, not by accident, but because doing so would confront doctrines and Temple Covenants the Church still enforces today.

However, a church's moral legitimacy rests on its willingness to face the truth, confess wrongs, and protect the conscience of its members above its own institutional interests. By contrast, the goals of corporate public relations are to manage perception, protect the brand, and maintain loyalty, even if that means withholding or reframing damaging truths. These values are legitimate in commerce. They are ethically ruinous in a religious institution claiming divine authority.

Modern LDS history writing and public messaging increasingly mirror corporate PR strategy, prioritizing brand protection over moral accountability. Three case studies illustrate the pattern.

Case 1: Richard E. Turley Jr. and the Mountain Meadows Massacre

Richard E. Turley Jr., a senior Church historian for decades and a temple-endowed member, has authored or co-authored three major works on the massacre: the Encyclopedia of Mormonism entry (1992), Massacre at Mountain Meadows (2008), and Vengeance Is Mine (2023). Across these works, Turley avoids engaging with the theological drivers, the Law of Obedience, the Oath of Vengeance, and Brigham Young's blood atonement rhetoric, that are central to understanding how ordinary believers could kill in unison.

Summary Table: Turley's Works & Theological Engagement

Work & Year	Theological Motifs Addressed?	Notes on Omission
<i>Encyclopedia of Mormonism</i> (1992)	Mostly factual, omits deeper theological analysis	Does not address obedience theology, covenants
<i>Massacre at Mountain Meadows</i> (2008)	Historical focus, little on Temple rituals	Neglects Oath of Vengeance, blood atonement
<i>Vengeance Is Mine</i> (2023)	Aftermath-centered, avoids theological context	Maintains omission of obedience/guilt dynamics

As a covenant-bound member, Turley has sworn not to reveal or publicly critique temple content, even if historically relevant. This creates a direct conflict of interest: he cannot fully explore the massacre's doctrinal causes without violating those oaths. The resulting histories function less as fearless scholarship and more as brand defense, faithful to the institution, but incomplete to the truth.

Case 2: Gordon A. Madsen and the Lawrence Sisters' Inheritance⁴

³ William W. Bishop, [Mormonism Unveiled; Or the Life and Confession of John D. Lee](https://archive.org/details/mormonismunveile00bish), 1877. Available via archive.org, [https://archive.org/details/mormonismunveile00bish]

⁴ [Marrying Wealthy Orphans](#) Francis N Henderson Aug 2025

In 1846, an Illinois jury awarded the Lawrence heirs \$7,759.06 in debt and \$4,275.88 in damages against Joseph Smith's estate for mishandling Maria and Sarah Lawrence inheritance while serving as their legal guardian. He failed in his fiduciary duty while secretly marrying both teenage wards. The impropriety was so plain that even some 19th-century insiders called it scandalous.

When Joseph Smith secretly married the Lawrence sisters in 1843, he was also publicly denying the practice of polygamy. In May 1844 he declared, "What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one."⁵ Such denials amount to "consciousness of guilt": Smith concealed what he knew to be indefensible, confirming by his own behavior the immorality of his actions.

Modern LDS historian and attorney Gordon A. Madsen, also a temple-endowed member, has revisited the case only to cast doubt on the original verdict, acting as "Judge, Prosecutor, Defense, and Jury" in his mind almost 180 years later and declaring the jury decision defective. His approach does not resolve the ethical breach; it merely seeds enough uncertainty to shield the Church's founding prophet from lasting reputational harm. This is a classic PR tactic: when faced with a damaging fact, don't refute it outright, cast doubt on its reliability.

Case 3: Wild Bill Hickman's Confession

William "Wild Bill" Hickman, a one-time enforcer for Brigham Young, asked to meet privately with Utah Supreme Court Justice Robert Newton Baskin and confessed that he had committed murders at Young's request. Baskin interviewed Hickman twice, found his statements credible, and recorded them⁶. Hickman, in his 1872 memoir, *Brigham's Destroying Angel*, confessed publicly to participating in murders at the behest of Church leaders, stating bluntly: "Brigham Young is the murderer, not I"⁷.

LDS institutional histories either omit Baskin's account entirely and or dismiss Hickman as unreliable preferring hearsay that he recanted, reported 20 years after publication of Hickman's confession and 9 years after Hickman death, and coming from a party Hickman implicated. The result is to protect Brigham Young's image, not to seek the most probable truth⁸.

Hickman's private admission, recorded by a sitting Utah Supreme Court Justice, stands apart from Hickman's sensational published autobiography and is widely regarded by historians as especially credible. It gives valuable corroboration to the claim that Young directed lethal actions, a point of intense debate in narratives surrounding obedience, authority, and law.

It reflects corporate PR logic: minimize exposure, control the narrative, and preserve leadership credibility.

The Pattern

In all three cases, LDS-affiliated historians and apologists avoid directly confronting evidence that could harm the Church's reputation. The corporate PR playbook is visible:

- Control the message by focusing on safe contexts and omitting dangerous doctrines.
- Reframe damaging facts by questioning credibility or procedure.

⁵ History of the Church, 6:408 (May 26, 1844).

⁶ R.N. Baskin, *Reminiscences of Early Utah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), 143–147.

⁷ William A. Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel: Being the Life, Confession, and Startling Disclosures of the Notorious Bill Hickman* (New York: George A. Crofutt, 1872), 25–30.

⁸ In her 1988 biography "Wild Bill Hickman and the Mormon Frontier", Hope A. Hilton reverses an earlier view and argues the book *Brigham's Destroying Angel* is substantially Hickman's own work, with J. H. Beadle adding only a preface, Ch. 1, a short diatribe, and a few brief inserts. She adds that "one of the most compelling questions about Hickman is why he implicated Brigham Young ... both in his book and in court." (Preface, pp. x–xi). [Utah Lighthouse Ministry](#) 

- Preserve leader image by ignoring or downplaying hostile testimony.

But a church's calling is different from a corporation's. A church must model moral courage, confess its wrongs, and uphold truth even when it is inconvenient. When a church behaves like a corporation, it trades the moral authority of truth for the shallow security of brand protection, eroding the trust of members and non-members alike.

The same moral architecture persists today. When Simon Southerton demonstrated that Native Americans (Lamanites) are not descended from Israelites⁹, the Church did not engage the evidence. It found reason to discipline the man and excommunicated him. When scholars like David P. Wright¹⁰ or Janice Allred¹¹ spoke honestly, obedience was demanded above their personal integrity.

This is not faith. It is control. Any institution that requires silence to survive has forfeited its moral authority. Truth does not fear scrutiny. Only power does.

--- The End ---

⁹ [DNA Genealogies of American Indians and the Book of Mormon](#), Simon Southerton, March 17, 2000

¹⁰ [Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance](#), Vol 3, Chapter 23, [David P. Wright](#), "PUSHED OUT OF MY SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL HOME"

¹¹ [Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance. Vol 2](#), 1996 explores the authoritarianism within the Church and the abuses that can occur as a result. [Janice Merrill Allred's](#) documentary history of the ecclesiastical action that led to her excommunication in May 1995 and its aftermath. Her account documents and raises questions of conscience, freedom of thought and expression, intent, motivation, authoritarianism, revelation, and truth. Her history is, in many ways, a record of ecclesiastical contempt for truth.