Clarion Review

General

White Flag: America's First 9/11
Waume Atilio Capurro
Wayne Atilio Capurro
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Four Stars (out of Five)

The revolutionary purpose of the Kingdom of God and its millennial plan is to reduce all nations and creeds to one political and religious standard… —Parley P. Pratt (Great Great Grandfather of Governor Mitt Romney)

Mountain Meadows Utah September 11 1857: A prosperous wagon train traveling from Arkansas to California is held siege by a band of Paiute Indians. The travelers seek help from the local Mormon militia who appear to negotiate safe passage. The group of over a hundred surrenders control of their weapons and begins to walk away relieved that the danger has passed. Suddenly the militia commander calls out “Do your duty to Israel!” Every man in the traveling party is instantly executed. The Paiutes and a few Mormons dispatch with the women and all children old enough to speak. Livestock belongings and money are divided before the killers settle in to digging shallow graves. The elders and militia leadership follow the Prophet’s lead in an extensive cover-up. All participants are sworn to secrecy and notified that “Blood Atonement” will be the cost of breaking that vow. Enforcement is the province of the “Danites” a cadre of holy assassins who exist to “use up” individuals troublesome to the church leadership.

The author is a descendent of Bishop Philip Klingensmith or P.K. the man whose conscience stirred a confession to his role in the atrocity. P.K. is portrayed as conflicted but not strong enough to refuse orders. “I expect I’ll be answering for what I’ve done every minute of every day for the rest of my life.” Attitudes vary among other Mormon characters from blind followers of millenialism to those whose complicity is driven by fear.

Family sources and twelve years research led to the conclusion that the militia fulfilled orders issued by the charismatic Prophet and Governor Brigham Young. Author Capurro acknowledges the value of nonfiction accounts including *Mountain Meadows Massacre* by Juanita Brooks who first substantially covered this subject in 1950; and also a recent take by

Will Bagley *Blood of the Prophets*. Bagley's book similarly assigns active responsibility to the executive himself. The Latter Day Saints organization vociferously denies this blaming Paiutes alone or conceding that a few militiamen of low rank acted on their own initiative. The subtitle: *America's First 9/11* exploits a skinny thread of connection to the jihadist terrorism of 2001 warning against theocracies and the destruction which goes hand in glove with religious extremism.

White Flag serves dual purposes: it will certainly engage readers for a few hours and it pours sunlight on a too-shadowy moment in the story of the American West. The author wishes to spur a healing conversation and he's eager to turn up substantiated facts whether they back his version of events or compete with it. Readers are invited share what they know at www.whiteflagbook.com.