

Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith Study Guide

**Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith
by Jon Krakauer**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue.....	4
Part I, Chapters 1 - 2.....	5
Part 1, Chapters 3 - 4.....	7
Part 1, Chapters 5 and 6.....	9
Part 1, Chapters 7 and 8.....	12
Part 2, Chapters 9 - 11.....	13
Part 2, Chapters 12 - 13.....	15
Part 2, Chapters 14 - 15.....	17
Part 2, Chapter 16.....	20
Part 3, Chapter 17.....	21
Part 3, Chapters 18 - 19.....	22
Chapter 20.....	24
Part 4, Chapters 21 - 22.....	25
Part 4, Chapter 23.....	27
Part 4, Chapters 24 - 26.....	29
Characters.....	31
Objects/Places.....	36
Themes.....	41
Style.....	43
Quotes.....	45
Topics for Discussion.....	49

Plot Summary

In *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*, author Jon Krakauer attempts to help readers understand why religious people perform heinous acts of violence. This text focuses on Mormon fundamentalists, specifically Ron and Dan Lafferty. These brothers are responsible for the murder of their sister-in-law and their niece. The two do not deny their crime, but they claim they are justified in their actions because they believe the murders were ordered by God.

Krakauer presents the story of the Lafferty brothers woven around the framework of the history of the Mormon Church. This history begins with the church's conception by Joseph Smith, then traces its peoples' bloody and violent search for a place to put down roots. This church history not only gives readers information about the beliefs of the early Mormon Church, to which the Laffertys were trying to return, but also gives information about the role of Mormons in American history. Krakauer presents this history in a winding fashion in which the story sometimes doubles back on itself, picks up another topic and then returns to the first topic.

The story of the Lafferty brothers is told beginning with a description of their childhood through their life in jail after the murders. According to the information provided by Krakauer the Lafferty boys' childhood was full of emotional turmoil because of the antics of their abusive, domineering father. As adults, the boys were easily swayed by the ideas of Mormon fundamentalism. The negative changes in Ron's behavior and personality as he searched for religious truth resulted in his wife leaving him. After his divorce, Ron became angry and volatile. Soon afterward, Ron began showing others a revelation he says was given to him by God. This revelation tells him to kill his brother, Allen's, wife, baby daughter, and two other people. After his trials, Ron is diagnosed by psychiatrists as having narcissistic personality disorder. Although this diagnosis indicates that Ron had some sort of emotional instability that precipitated his murderous acts, it avoids labeling Ron as insane since that label would indicate that anyone who "spoke" with God, including praying to him, could be considered crazy.

Prologue

Prologue Summary and Analysis

In the prologue to his book, writer Jon Krakauer gives the details of the murders of Erica and Brenda Lafferty. Two brothers, Dan and Ron Lafferty, are arrested and charged in connection with the murders. Dan is condemned to life in prison while Ron is given a death sentence. Although they admit to committing the crimes, neither Dan nor Ron believe their acts were wrong. They believe instead they were carrying out the will of God. Krakauer tells his reader that in the course of his book, he intends to try to explain the circumstances that lead to such gruesome acts being committed by men in the name of God.

Krakauer uses his prologue as an opportunity to describe the factual details of the murders of Brenda and Erica Lafferty. Included in the information he presents is the timeline of the day of the murders given from Allen Lafferty's, Brenda's husband's, point of view. In this prologue Krakauer also gives a brief description of the murder scene. In his text, Krakauer includes direct quotes from articles posted in the Salt Lake Tribune about the murders, and arrests of the Lafferty brothers. These facts serve as a backdrop for the true intention of Krakauer's book. He writes that he intends to try to describe exactly why the brothers committed the murders.



Part I, Chapters 1 - 2

Part I, Chapters 1 - 2 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 1, Krakauer gives a brief synopsis of the modern Mormon Church. Information in this chapter also gives important highlights of the history of this church. One point that Krakauer makes in this chapter is that the modern Mormons do not accept Lafferty as a member of their congregation, nor do they condone his murderous actions. It should be noted, however, both the fundamentalists, like Lafferty, as well as the modern Mormons come from the same roots and believe in the same laws and principles. The main area of contention between the Mormons and the Fundamentalists is that the Fundamentalists believe that men should be allowed to marry more than one woman. Although the disagreement about this practice of polygamy is one issue that has long plagued the Mormon Church, most members try to present this practice as one that has been abandoned by the Mormon membership. Despite the modern Mormons' dislike for their polygamous background, it should be noted that the well-respected leader and founder of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith, practiced polygamy.

After Smith's murder, Brigham Young was appointed as the church's new leader. He led the Saints to settle in the current state of Utah. Young's group of followers openly practiced polygamy. As this practice was offensive to most Americans at the time, President James Buchanan attempted to end polygamy through the Utah War. Buchanan was not successful in his attempt. It was not until the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887 that the church members were finally forced to give up their practice of polygamy. Although most modern Mormons do not practice or condone polygamy, there are a few fundamentalists who still cling to this practice. They believe that a new prophet will come to restore this principle of polygamy to the church.

In Chapter 2, Krakauer writes about Colorado City. This city is home to several Mormon Fundamentalist sects which are led by Rulon T. Jeffs. Although these Mormons believe that any organized government is a work of Satan, they do not shirk from accepting funds from these same governments. According to Krakauer, these Mormons benefit from yearly government assistance to the tune of more than \$ 6 million. These funds include monies to support the public school systems, as well as the food stamps and other welfare assistance that the polygamous families receive. DeLoy Bateman, who has been excommunicated from this church, states that these fundamentalist Mormons believe this act of benefiting from government funds is actually a virtuous act. They feel they are working to defeat the establishment that they see as a devil.

Throughout this chapter, Krakauer often refers to information gained through an interview with DeLoy, the apostate who has been excommunicated from the church. DeLoy tells Krakauer that he was excommunicated because lies were told about him which Mormon leader Jeffs believed. DeLoy decided that since Jeffs didn't realize the stories were lies, this indicated Jeffs was not a man of God. Therefore, Bateman left the church. Although this action put him in danger of losing his wives and children, they



chose to stay with him despite his split from the church. Currently, DeLoy is being sued by the Mormons because his house stands on property owned by the church. DeLoy's extended family refuses to have any contact with him because he has separated from the church.

In the second section of Chapter 2, Krakauer delves into the background of Colorado City, which was first called Short Creek. An attempt was made in 1953 to rid this Mormon town of polygamy. Polygamous parents were arrested while their children were put in foster care. Unfortunately, the public was sympathetic to the persecuted polygamists. As a result of this sympathy, the families were reunited and life went on as usual in Short Creek. It was not until 1998 when a teenaged bride was beaten by her father for running away from her husband that this community again received public attention. In 2000 another polygamist was tried for bigamy and rape. Unfortunately for the Mormons, news of this trial was broadcast country wide.

Tom Green was charged for his crimes of polygamy after he was seen by lawyer David Leavitt on the television show Dateline bragging about his numerous young wives. Although Leavitt was not out to prosecute these polygamists, he could not ignore the blatant crimes that he was seeing Green advertise on the television program. One of Tom's wives, Linda, insists that her husband did nothing wrong and that she has not been traumatized in any way by her early marriage. Linda's mother also approves of and supports her daughter's marriage. In the remainder of this chapter, however, Krakauer notes various instances in which Mormon wives claim they were abused and manipulated by their families and older husbands.



Part 1, Chapters 3 - 4

Part 1, Chapters 3 - 4 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 3 addresses the Canadian polygamist colony called Bountiful. Like Colorado City, Bountiful is also under the control of Jeffs. Girls are regularly transported between Colorado City and Bountiful to become plural wives. Debbie Oler Blackmore Ralston Palmer was a member of the Bountiful community. She presents a non-favorable picture of plural wives. For instance, one of Debbie's father's plural wives was physically abusive to Debbie. Debbie also had trouble with the idea that men held all the power in Mormon religion and families. Women were commanded to be submissive at all times.

Family relationships are also complicated in communities where plural marriages occur. Through plural marriages, Debbie's family tree shows she is her own stepgrandmother. Fathers may marry their own stepdaughters or even adopted daughters. In their sex lives, however, husbands are only permitted by law to have sex with their wives when the women are ovulating. Therefore, sex is seen only as a way to create more babies. Despite this law of chastity, Debbie tells stories of sexual abuse between teenaged Mormon boys and juvenile girls. In addition, Debbie reports that she suffered through three unhappy marriages while in the Mormon society. After her third husband was removed from the priesthood and Winston Blackmore asked for her daughter in marriage, a proposition Debbie detested, Debbie sets fire to her house, making it look like an accident. After the fire, Debbie packs up her children and leaves Bountiful.

The topic of Chapter 4 is the kidnapping of Elizabeth Smart by independent Mormon Fundamentalist Brian David Mitchell. While Mitchell was working one day at the Smart's house, he became infatuated with Elizabeth. He kidnapped her from her bedroom one night and took her to his campsite where he married her. During this section, Krakauer uses information gained from interviews with both Dan Lafferty and Debbie Palmer to help his readers understand why Elizabeth was so easily influenced by this man. Elizabeth's Mormon upbringing with its emphasis on obedience and passiveness made her the perfect victim for Mitchell. Even after Mitchell was arrested for his crime, he continued to insist that his marriage to Elizabeth was ordained by God.

As a current antipolygamy activist, Flora Jessop ran away from the Mormon community after she was promised in marriage in a polygamous relationship. Her younger sister Ruby Jessop, however, was married to an older polygamous man who raped her brutally. Ruby ran away from her husband but was supposedly kidnapped by members of the FLDS church. It is known only that Ruby gave birth to a child at the age of sixteen. Nothing has been heard from Ruby since.

Krakauer leaves his reader with the impression that Ruby's plight was ignored by police because she was born into a family that practiced polygamy. Because Elizabeth was kidnapped and forced into this lifestyle, there was more media attention and public effort put into locating her and saving her from her plight. Lorna Craig, another antipolygamy



activist and friend of Flora Jessop insists there are numerous young women who are being abused by the leaders of the FLDS on a daily basis. As even the police forces in these areas are polygamists, there is no way for these young girls to break away from these abusive situations.

Through his book it is important to notice that Krakauer draws his information from a variety of different sources. He not only quotes hard evidence, such as newspaper articles, court documents and government records, but also interviews various sources, such as former FLDS members. For instance, in Chapter 4 Krakauer includes Dan Lafferty's reactions to the news of Elizabeth's kidnapping. He also talks to Flora Jessop, a former member of the FLDS who ran away from her home after she was promised to a polygamous man in an arranged marriage.



Part 1, Chapters 5 and 6

Part 1, Chapters 5 and 6 Summary and Analysis

It is in this chapter that Krakauer's story changes direction. In previous chapters, he has shared with his reader the ways of life in the Mormon society. He has also noted the Mormon men's desire for ultimate control of the females as well as the emphasis on female submission. Krakauer has told the numerous ways the women are abused in these polygamous communities and the reasons why they stay in these relationships. He has even contrasted the public opinion of the kidnapping of Elizabeth Smart to the treatment of Mormon girls who are raised in the same way Elizabeth was on a daily basis. In Chapter 5, Krakauer indicates that he will try to describe the faith that causes Fundamentalist Mormons to commit terrible crimes such as murder.

In Chapter 5, Krakauer first points out how strongly those who believe in the Mormon faith admire Joseph Smith, the founder of their religion. Joseph was born in 1805, the son of a tenant farmer. In 1817 the family settled in Palmyra, New York. Joseph is described as being a thinker, one who was always pondering the deep questions about the meaning of life and the nature of God. Joseph was good-looking and athletic, and he had a charisma that seemed to draw people to him. At about the age of fourteen Joseph had his first experience with a seer and peep stone. This experience gives Joseph directions to his own peep stone. This stone allows Joseph to begin a profitable career as a diviner. However, because he was never able to find any of the treasure that he purported to know the location of, he was sued by one of his clients, bringing his career to an end.

At the age of seventeen, Joseph has an encounter with the angel Moroni who shows Joseph the location of gold plates inscribed with a religious text. As Joseph tries to get the plates before he has received permission, however, they vanish from his sight. After his error, Joseph was instructed to meet the angel on the hill where the plates had first been hidden on September 22nd of each year. In the year of 1827, Joseph was allowed a second chance to view these golden plates. These plates, which were seen by only nineteen other people, were written in some form of Egyptian. To help with his translation, the angel also gave Joseph a pair of special glasses.

In the process of interpreting the text, Joseph's transcriber lost 116 pages of translated material. At this point the angel Moroni had already taken back the gold plates as well as the glasses. Fortunately Joseph is allowed a second chance to view the plates. This time he has to rely on his peep stones to translate the Egyptian material. After the translation is finished, Joseph supposedly receives a revelation from God that his friend, John Harris, is to pay the printer's bill. With this detail taken care of, the first copies of The Book of Mormon are printed. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially incorporated in April of 1830.



Although Krakauer cites no sources for his description of the way in which the LDS church was formed, it is assumed that he has factual basis for his presentation of this story. Even though this story does seem unbelievable, it should be noted that there are some stories in the Christian Bible that seem equally questionable. However, it does seem strange that Smith would be given the golden plates, but then had to rely on a peep stone, a fixture of fortune telling and sorcery, to translate it. Note also that the text indicates that it was this same peep stone that Smith used when trying to locate buried treasure for paying clients. However, Smith was eventually charged with fraud because he was never able to locate any treasure with his stone. If the stone was unreliable in locating treasure, how was it more reliable in translating Holy Scriptures? Note also that it was this peep stone that told Joseph that he must be married to Emma Harris before he would be able to view the gold plates again. This was not a command made by the angel, or God but instead a rock. Also, the command for Harris to pay the printer's bill was supposedly given to Joseph directly through God. It seems strange that there would be so many different avenues through which Joseph received his instructions.

In Chapter 6, Krakauer discusses The Book of Mormon. He writes not only about the content of this religious text, but also the problems associated with the truth of the text. Krakauer indicates that although there are things about the book that don't make sense scientifically, all religions have these idiosyncrasies. Krakauer defends the text by indicting that it has had a great appeal to various groups of people, Americans in particular.

Krakauer presents his discussion of The Book of Mormon against the backdrop of a pageant performed each year on the hill that marks the location where Joseph found the gold plates. Although picketers generally show up to speak their mind about the Mormon faith, the Mormons are unfazed by these displays of hate. In fact, Krakauer notes that one man attending the pageant notes states that it is these picketers who should be in fear for their mortal souls, not the Mormons. The content of the pageant follows The Book of the Mormon. According to the book, Lehi leads his family to the area of North America nearly six hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Once in this new land, a disagreement causes the tribe to split into two parts; one led by Lehi's righteous son Nephi, the other by his evil son Laman. The two sects rejoin temporarily after a visit from Jesus Christ after his resurrection. However, the Lamanites soon return to their evil ways. A war breaks out between the two sects in which all of the Nephites are killed. Mormon and his son Moroni, who was the angel who later delivered the gold plates to Joseph, were two of the last living Nephites.

There are problems associated with the believability of The Book of Mormon. First, since Joseph had to return the gold plates, there is no proof of their existence. Also, references in the book aren't supported by the way things actually happened in the world. For instance, research has been conducted that proves the North American Indians, supposed descendants of the Lamanites, had no Hebrew descendants in their lineage. Krakauer points out, however, other religious texts also show signs of the same inconsistencies as The Book of Mormon. He indicates the main difference between these religious texts is that the Mormon religion is so young as compared to other religions.



At the time period in which Joseph translated and published The Book of Mormon, his portrayal of history fit the beliefs generally held at that time. Those who joined the Mormon faith believed this book was a necessary addition to the Christian Bible. These Mormons believe that their religion corrects a theological mistake made by widely accepted Christian religions. Note that Krakauer does not indicate what theological mistake the Mormons believe the Christian religions have made.

Unlike other Christian religions whose Holy Lands are overseas, the Mormons believe the United States is their Holy Land. For instance, The Book of Mormon indicates that after His resurrection, Jesus visited America and appeared to the Native Americans. Joseph also claims that God revealed to him that the Garden of Eden was located in North America. Another idea that made the Mormon religion so appealing to Americans was that Mormons were told they would be allowed to have their own personal relationship with God. Not only did Joseph receive revelations from God, he claimed that other followers could receive revelations in the same way.



Part 1, Chapters 7 and 8

Part 1, Chapters 7 and 8 Summary and Analysis

Krakauer opens Chapter 7 with the profile of a man excommunicated from both the Mormon Church and the Fundamentalist Mormon Church as a result of the revelations he believes he received from God. Robert Crossfield, who also calls himself the Prophet Onias, believes that God has given him revelations about problems in the Mormon Church. As a result of these revelations, Crossfield has written *The Second Book of Commandments*. When the current president of the Mormon Church, Mark E. Peterson, read Crossfield's book of commandments, Peterson had Crossfield thrown out of the church. Soon Crossfield's criticism of the beliefs of the Fundamentalist Church as well as Crossfield's belief that he might be the one God had sent to reform the Mormon Church caused the United Effort Plan (UEP) to kick Crossfield out of the Fundamentalist sect of the church as well.

Krakauer then goes on to describe how the idea that each individual member of the Mormon Church could receive revelations from God was one of the main keys of the Mormon faith. According to Krakauer, Joseph realized too late how much trouble this idea of personal revelation could be to his own leadership. As a result, Joseph edited this idea to indicate that only church leaders could receive revelation about church procedure or theology. His editing was too late to keep some believers, such as Crossfield, from trying to reform the church.

At this point, Krakauer turns his attention to the city of Provo and Utah County, the seat of the Mormon faith. It is in this area that the Dream Mine, a mine supposedly containing the Nephites' gold, is located. This gold, according to the angel Moroni, would be discovered in time to help the Mormons survive the hard times before the Second Coming of Jesus. It is this mine that draws Crossfield to the Provo area. Once in the area, Crossfield goes about setting up a group called *The School of the Prophets*. Watson Lafferty and his five brothers, including Dan, become members of this group. One of Crossfield's intentions with this group, along with the reinstatement of polygamy, was to teach his followers how to receive revelations from God.

In Chapter 8, Krakauer takes the opportunity to describe Dan Lafferty's youth. Dan's father, Watson, was a disciplinarian who often beat his family members. Watson also had strong political beliefs. In addition, he preferred the practices of prayer and fasting to conventional medicine. Despite his father's beliefs, however, Dan remembers his childhood as a happy one. Dan marries a woman he meets on a mission trip, and then attends chiropractic school. During his time in school, Dan learns about polygamy and decides to learn all that he can about the practice. To the dismay of his first wife, Matilda, Dan puts these practices into play in their own home. Although she was unhappy with the situation, Matilda was threatened that if she tried to leave Dan she would lose her children.



Part 2, Chapters 9 - 11

Part 2, Chapters 9 - 11 Summary and Analysis

Much of the North American society was offended by the beliefs and doctrines printed in The Book of Mormon. In the wake of this dislike, Joseph goes in search of a place for his followers to settle. He receives a revelation in which God tells him the people are to live in Jackson County, Missouri. Joseph claims that God has told him that this place was the actual location of the Garden of Eden. Residents of Missouri, however, dislike the Mormons' act of basically coming in and taking over their area as if they were entitled to it, as the Mormons believed they were. Relations worsened between the Mormons and the Missourians until the Missourians began tarring and feathering, stoning, harassing and even killing Mormons. In November of 1833 many Mormons were run out of the state of Missouri by vigilantes. After this incident relations between the Mormons and Missourians were strained, but calm. This calmness may have resulted because the Mormons were allowed to settle in Caldwell County, which was not heavily populated, and because Joseph encouraged his followers not to retaliate against the Gentiles. In August of 1838, however, a political debate caused an intoxicated Missourian to beat up a Mormon. Other Mormons came to his aid and triumphed over the Missourians.

After their loss in this skirmish the Missourians once again began to harass the Mormons. This time Joseph gave his people permission to fight back against the Missourians. The Missouri governor responded by giving the militia permission to treat the Mormons as enemies. As a result on October 30, 1838 25 Mormon families were ambushed as they worked in their fields. Although the Mormon leader voiced a desire to surrender, 18 Mormons were killed that day. Many of those dead were shot at close range as they tried to seek cover in a blacksmith shop. The only way Joseph was told his people could ever hope for peace was for "Joseph and six other Mormon leaders to face charges of treason; provide monetary compensation to the Missourians for property that had been plundered and destroyed; surrender all Mormon weapons; and then abandon the state of Missouri altogether."

The Mormons accepted the terms of this surrender. Joseph and the other leaders were found guilty of treason and jailed. They were not killed thanks to the heroic stance of Missouri general Alexander Doniphan who refused to carry out the illegal order to kill the civilians. Later as sympathy for the Mormons began to increase as a result of the treatment they were receiving at the hands of the Missourians, Joseph and the other Mormon leaders were allowed to "escape" from jail as a way to end this sticky situation.

In Chapter 10, Joseph and his followers settle in Nauvoo, Illinois. Because Illinois was trying to increase its population they allowed special permission for this city to be a theocratic principality with Joseph as its leader. Within this principality Joseph built up his own army. He even ran for United States President. Remember that at this point, Joseph still had treason charges against him stemming from the events in Missouri.



Joseph considered the Missourians' attempts to arrest him as harassment and prophesied that the governor of Missouri would be killed within a year. This prophecy was discovered by a Mormon by the name of Orrin Porter Rockwell who later shot at the governor in an attempt to make Joseph's prophesy come true. The governor recovered from his injuries, and Rockwell was never arrested nor punished for his crimes.

At this point, Krakauer moves on to write about the current view of Joseph Smith. He indicates first that Joseph had a great charisma that drew people to him. The people who knew Joseph wrote about him and his actions, both good and bad. Because Joseph lived in such a modern time, with newspapers and such, it has been difficult for the Mormons to present a flaw free picture of their leader. Krakauer suspects that it is this portrayal of Joseph as a fully human person with human flaws that makes it so easy for today's Mormons to respect him. These Mormons also liked the way that Joseph redefined Christianity into something fresh and modern. However, it was Joseph's inclusion of Section 132, the section that encourages plural marriage, in the Doctrine and Commandments that has caused a rift in the Mormon Church and ultimately resulted Joseph's death.

In Chapter 11, Krakauer returns to Dan Lafferty and his study of the pamphlet *The Peace Maker*, which Dan believes was written by Joseph. It is believed the booklet might have been published at the point when Joseph was trying to introduce the idea of polygamy to his followers in Nauvoo. Although it was published in Joseph's print press, it is doubtful he actually wrote the pamphlet. When his followers were shocked at the ideas contained in the pamphlet, Joseph even claimed the text was printed without his knowledge. Krakauer writes that despite his claim he was not responsible for this text, Joseph was actually already in the process of practicing polygamy. Despite an incident where Joseph was almost castrated by a mob of outraged men for his behavior, he continued to seek out new wives.

It is indicated that Joseph believed that God would not have made the idea of having more than one wife so pleasing to a man if it wasn't acceptable to God. Often those women to whom Joseph proposed were forced into a marriage with him by being told that they and their families would be damned to hell if they didn't marry Joseph. One woman recalls actually having a religious experience in which God revealed to her that she was to marry Joseph. Even though Joseph had at least forty wives at this point, he continued to deny to his followers that he was actively participating in polygamy.



Part 2, Chapters 12 - 13

Part 2, Chapters 12 - 13 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 12, Krakauer gives his reader insight into Emma's feelings about Joseph's plural marriages. Emma, who was Joseph's first wife, even went to the point of threatening to take another husband in order to discourage her husband's polygamy. It is actually believed that Joseph may have penned Section 132 in an attempt to make his wife stop harassing him about his numerous wives. It is interesting to note that in this revelation Joseph writes that God has approved a man having many wives, but not a woman having many husbands. Included in this revelation is also a veiled threat to Joseph's first wife that if she does not cooperate with Joseph's desire to have numerous wives, she will be doomed to hell. This threat of damnation seems to be a repeated threat to Mormon women in order to keep them in line with what their men want them to do.

According to Krakauer's text, William Law, who was a friend of Joseph Smith even though William did not like or approve of the practice of polygamy, tried to intercede with Joseph on Emma's behalf. Law's friendship with Joseph was ended when Joseph allegedly attempted to seduce Law's own wife. As a result, Law was excommunicated from the Mormon Church by Joseph. Law attempted to start his own branch of the Mormon Church. He even began a newspaper which told of Joseph's secret polygamous affairs. Unfortunately, the people supported Joseph. Under Joseph's leadership, they ransacked and burned Law's printing press. Although Law tried to charge Joseph and his men with the crimes in court, these charges were dropped because Joseph had control of the courts. Law was forced to run from Nauvoo in fear of his life.

Even though these acts by Law did not have much effect on Joseph's power over his people, they did stir up bad relations between the Mormons and the native people of Illinois. For many of the same reasons they were not liked by the Missourians, the Mormons were also disliked by those who lived in Illinois. For starters, the Illinoisans did not approve of the Mormons' attempt to dispose of any part of government that didn't allow them to practice their religion the way they wanted. Joseph's destruction of Law's printing press also caused the Gentiles of this area to fear that Joseph's intention was to become a tyrannical leader of their entire area.

In an attempt to curb a civil war in the area Illinois' governor Thomas Ford suggested Joseph surrender for the crime of the destruction of the printing press. Instead of following this suggestion, Joseph and his brother run from the area. A letter from Emma telling Joseph he should be ashamed for abandoning his people causes Joseph and his brother to return to the area. Joseph and eleven of his accomplices surrender and are jailed in the Carthage jail. Although Ford intends to protect these Mormon leaders and see that they have a fair trial, the people have other ideas. A group of militiamen called the Warsaw Dragoons, in cooperation with the Carthage Grays who were in charge of



defending the jail in which Joseph and his brother were being held, stormed the jail killing Joseph and Hyrum.

In Chapter 13, Krakauer turns his attention back to the Lafferty brothers. Dan has read *The Peace Maker* and is trying to incorporate its principles in his own life. He has also learned about the principle of blood atonement once followed by the original Mormon Church. According to this principle certain crimes could only be atoned if the perpetrator was killed. These early Mormons also believed God's laws took precedence over the laws of the government. Dan, who already resented government intrusion after they caused the close of one of his businesses, became interested in political issues. Dan and Mark, two of the Lafferty brothers begin discussing these political issues between themselves. Soon the younger Lafferty siblings are also showing up for the discussions. It is important to notice that when Dan defends his point of view about political issues, he points to information found in *The Book of Mormon*. It seems that it is at the point that Dan begins to follow the teachings of the early church that his life begins to fall apart. Dan defends his changing beliefs by saying that he was on a quest to find the truth.

As a result of his new beliefs Dan gave up his driver's license and marriage license. He refused to follow traffic rules or pay taxes. It was at the point that his parents' home and property was almost auctioned off because Dan refused to pay property taxes on it that his father stepped in and paid the required fees. At this time Dan was gaining more and more influence over his younger brothers. The wives of these men, however, begin to complain when their husbands attempt to implement the principles of *The Peace Maker* in their own homes.



Part 2, Chapters 14 - 15

Part 2, Chapters 14 - 15 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 14, Krakauer first discusses the once solid relationship between Dianna and Ron Lafferty. Note that Ron is the only one of the Lafferty brothers who has not joined in the fundamentalist movement with his brothers. Although Ron has not joined this group, he is not a perfect role model. As a young missionary working for the Mormon Church, Ron had a rebellious streak that prohibited him from following all of the rules as he was supposed to. For instance, he refused to wear the hat or coat which were part of the Mormon uniform. After his stint as a missionary was finished, Ron and his new wife, Dianna, returned to Utah to be near his family. He provided emotional support and stability for this family.

Since Ron was so revered by his siblings, his wife Dianna asks him to speak with his brothers about their strange new beliefs that were making their wives so unhappy. Although Dan remembers that Ron had come to them with the intention to persuade them to forget their fundamentalist ways, by the time they left the meeting, the other brothers had actually convinced Ron it was their beliefs that were correct. Because Dianna wanted to save her marriage, she went along with some of Ron's new beliefs, but she would only go so far. Dianna began to reach out to others for help when her husband voiced his desire to marry their daughters to other men as plural wives.

Brenda, who was Allen's wife, was the only one of the Lafferty brother's who refused to go along at all with the trend toward fundamentalism. Brenda also discouraged Allen from being involved with his brothers. It was just shortly after Brenda and Allen were married that Brenda began to realize she had married into a family of religious fanatics. As Brenda experiences Allen's refusal to take their sick baby to the doctor, then the death of Allen's own father because he refused medical treatment, she realizes how strange the family actually was. It is Brenda who encourages Dianna to divorce her husband as he becomes more and more fanatical and abusive. Ron is stunned when his wife leaves him and goes to visit a polygamous community to escape his pain.

When Ron returns from his visit, he finds that his brothers have been introduced to the Prophet Onias. All of the brothers, with the exception of Allen, join Onias' School of the Prophets. It was a result of Brenda's influence that Allen did not join this organization. In fact, Brenda's influence over her husband and refusal to go along with the Lafferty's desire to return to the old ways of the Mormon Church was causing increasing tension between her and the Lafferty brothers.

In Chapter 15, Krakauer turns his discussion to the Prophet Onias and Bernard Brady. These two, along with four of the five Lafferty brothers, felt they were destined to change the course of humanity. In fact, this group prepares a pamphlet that they send to the leaders of the Mormon Church describing how upset God is by the way that the his church has been managed and led astray. Especially distasteful to Onias and his group



are the ideas that black men would be allowed to become priests in the Mormon Church, as well as the refusal of the modern church to embrace the practice of polygamy.

Onias believes the Lafferty brothers were sent to him by God to help promote his cause. The brothers, likewise, believed they had been introduced to Onias by a heavenly influence. Ron was elected as the bishop of the School of the Prophets. Ron's personal life, however, was not going well. He had lost all of his material possessions and was now living in his car. Although he claims he enjoys the opportunity to become closer to God, Ron becomes increasingly angry at the people whom he sees as being at fault for his wife leaving him. These people were Richard Stowe, Chloe Low and Brenda Lafferty.

Since the loss of his family Ron made the School of the Prophets his entire life. Although the "school" was founded on fundamentalist principles, another of its purposes was to teach students how to receive revelations from God. Ron soon begins having these revelations. One of these revelations dealt with the anger of God toward Dianna for leaving Ron. Another of Ron's revelations addresses the idea that Ron is one of God's "mighty and strong" prophets. Although these revelations may seem delusional and self endorsed, Ron believes he was truly hearing the voice of God. Finally, Ron receives the revelation commanding the murders of Brenda and Erica Lafferty, Richard Stowe and Chloe Low. His brother Dan is the first one to whom Ron shows this revelation. Dan encourages Ron to be sure the revelation is really from God. Then Ron has another revelation in which God tells him that Dan is the one who should actually perform the murders. As the two mull over the revelations, they find a passage from The Book of Mormon that they both believe supports their idea that the revelation is indeed a word from God.

Ron next shares his revelation with Bernard Brady. Brady is horrified by the revelation and wants nothing to do with it. At the following meeting of the School of the Prophets, nothing more is said about the revelation. At this meeting, however, Watson brings a straight razor that he wants to have blessed. Watson is offended when this request is refused. Krakauer writes that the relationship between Ron and Onias began to fall apart during this time period. As Ron became more and more angry and resentful, he began to challenge Onias' authority. Ron also began experimenting with drugs. He made fun of Onias when he would not try these drugs as well. At a meeting where Ron became drunk on the wine he insisted the group use for sacrament, Ron showed the removal revelation with the rest of the group. Although Ron, Dan and Watson believed the revelation was valid, the other six members of the group told them they should not even consider it as legitimate. As a result of this decision, Ron, Dan and Watson left the school permanently.

The remainder of this chapter addresses the idea that although several people knew about this removal revelation, no one ever warned any of the people listed in the revelation about its existence. Brady writes an affidavit stating that he believes the lives of a total of ten people listed in the revelation are in danger. Allen, Brenda's husband, learns about the revelation only because Dan mentions it to him. Allen, however, does

not mention this threat to his wife. According to Krakauer, Brenda's family members still blame Allen for not warning his wife that she was in danger.

After their scrape with the members of the School of the Prophets, Ron and Dan start out across the country in Ron's station wagon. Because the brothers were out of the area Brady remembers feeling as if the revelation would not come to pass. However, he receives a call from Tim Lafferty on July 25 saying that the brothers had followed through with their plans.



Part 2, Chapter 16

Part 2, Chapter 16 Summary and Analysis

Krakauer begins Chapter 16 by describing Brenda's fear of the Lafferty brothers. In addition to this fear, Allen has become more and more abusive of Brenda when she stood up to him or his brothers. At one point, Brenda announces to her sister that she plans to leave Allen. At the time, the sister tells Brenda to work things out with her husband. Knowing now the horror of Brenda's situation with Allen, her sister wishes she hadn't encouraged her sister to go back to Allen.

Meanwhile, during their road trip, Ron and Dan take the opportunity to get to know each other better. It is during this time that Dan seems to become less sure about Ron's revelation. He indicates he prays about the situation and believes he received from God instructions to stay with his brother. Krakauer goes on to describe the details of Ron and Dan's road trip. He writes how the two pick up Ricky Knapp and Chip Carnes, the two men who are with the Lafferty brothers when they commit the murders of Brenda and Erica Lafferty. In the days before the murders, Dan visits with two of his wives, and then the group goes to Claudine Lafferty's house. It is during this time that the members of the group discuss the removal revelation. Krakauer notes that as the men talked, their mother was knitting within hearing distance of her sons.

In this same chapter, Krakauer goes on to describe the events of the day of July 24, the day Brenda and her baby were murdered. In the morning, Ron saws off the barrel of a shotgun in obedience to a revelation by God. He, Dan, Ricky Knapp and Carnes then load up their things into the Impala. They head to Brenda's house where Ron knocks on the door, armed with the barrel of the shotgun and a boning knife. There is no answer so Ron gets back in the car and they drive away. Dan gets a feeling as if he is supposed to drive back to the house, and he turns the car around. This time Brenda comes to the door when Dan knocks. Brenda will not allow Dan in, so he pushes his way into the house. The three men in the car hear noises inside the apartment and Knapp suggests Ron go in and help Dan. After the two beat Brenda in an attempt to knock her unconscious, Ron wants to leave. Dan, however, calmly finishes the job of killing Brenda and Erica. Carnes and Knapp are scared when the brothers leave the apartment covered in blood. They then head to Chloe Low's house to fulfill the rest of the revelation.



Part 3, Chapter 17

Part 3, Chapter 17 Summary and Analysis

Krakauer takes his readers back in time again as he turns from his story of the Lafferty brothers back to the history of the Mormon Church. Porter Rockwell has just ridden to Nauvoo with the terrible news that Joseph Smith has been killed. Along with their grief over the loss of their leader, the Mormons have to deal with the decision of who to select as their new prophet. Although they had no clear guidelines describing how to go about choosing this new leader, the people decided on a new leader based solely on his ideas about the practice of polygamy. Anti-polygamists hoped the role of the new prophet would be filled by Joseph's younger brother. However, this brother mysteriously died before a new prophet could be chosen. Krakauer mentions evidence indicates the brother may have been poisoned.

In the end of the debate, it is the pro-polygamy Brigham Young who is chosen to replace Joseph. Not only does Brigham attempt to imitate the speaking style of Joseph, some listening to Brigham even believe that he takes on the stature and resemblance of the church's first prophet. Although Brigham's style of leadership was much different than that of Joseph, Brigham gave the people the discipline and firm hand of guidance that they needed during this stressful time.

Nine people involved in the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith were tried in court. It was not surprising that none of the nine men were found guilty of any crime. At the one year anniversary of Joseph's death, Brigham has his new followers vow to avenge the death of Joseph on the United States. Even after Joseph's murderers were found not guilty, vigilantes began burning Mormon homes. This time the Mormons fought back. Fearing a civil war, the Illinois governor finally promised a cease fire if the Mormons would leave not only the state of Illinois, but also the United States. As a result, the Mormons settled in the area near the Great Salt Lake, which is currently Salt Lake City in Utah.

At this point in time, this area was not yet part of the United States so Brigham Young had free reign to run his community the way he liked. He chose this time to introduce the idea of polygamy to his people. This time they accepted the principle. As time went on and the United States borders crept closer and closer to the Mormon settlement, the Mormons once again came under government control.



Part 3, Chapters 18 - 19

Part 3, Chapters 18 - 19 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 18, Krakauer details the events of the Mountain Meadow massacre. The Fancher group, which includes about 140 emigrants as well as cattle and horses, stop for rest in Mountain Meadow on their way down the Old Spanish Trail to California. As they are preparing to leave the next morning, the emigrants are fired upon. They circle their wagons and attempt to protect themselves against the gunshots. Although the emigrants believe they are being attacked by Indians, there are actually Mormons in the ranks of the attacking Indians.

It had been Brigham's idea to entice the Indians to help the Mormons defend themselves not only against passing wagon trains, but also against the federal government's soldiers. Brigham had also been encouraging outrage in his own people against the Gentiles. All of this rage that Brigham had stirred up was taken out against the members of the Fancher wagon train. In addition, General George A. Smith is sent through Utah encouraging the people to attack Gentiles on behalf of their own religion. Unfortunately for the Mormons the Fancher wagon train held up to the Indian attack much longer than they had thought possible. As the Mormons and Indians keep the wagon train circled they send a letter to Brigham Young asking for instructions. Two men from the wagon train escape and run for help. Unfortunately, they reach only more Mormons and the two are shot and killed.

Brigham's letter arrives two days after the Mountain Meadow massacre is complete. After receiving no word from their leader the Mormons follow the orders of Commander Dame who tells them to do away with the emigrants. Since many of the Indians had left the Mormon's ranks Lee sends a rider to tell the emigrants the Mormons will negotiate with the Indians for the emigrants' release. The wounded and children are taken first, followed by the women, then the men in a single file line. Each man has a Mormon guard. Major Higbee, who brings up the rear of the line suddenly yells for his men to do their duty. Each Mormon shoots the emigrant he has been assigned to guard. Meanwhile, the women are attacked by the Indians. Only seventeen members of the Fancher party were allowed to live. These were all children younger than five years old. When Colonel Dame sees the carnage left by the massacre, he tries to deny having any part in the crime. Although Dame oversees the burial of the dead, animals have soon dug up the shallow graves and drug the bodies about the land again. The Mormons agreed to tell anyone who asked that the Indians alone were responsible for the massacre.

In Chapter 19, Krakauer describes his trip with the Bateman family up Mount Dellenbaugh. Their goal is to find a 132-year-old signature supposedly scratched into a rock at the top of the mountain. This signature belonged to William Dunn, one of a group exploring the Grand Canyon. Although it is told that the Indians killed Dunn and



two of his expedition companions, it is suspected that it was actually the Mormons who did the killing.

Also in this chapter, Krakauer writes two years after the massacre United States Army Brevet Major James H. Carleton discovered the remains of the people murdered in Mountain Meadow massacre. They discovered evidence that the people had been abused. Carleton had his men gather all of the remains into a common grave, and then built a rock memorial to honor the dead. When Brigham Young discovers this monument, he and the men who are with him tear the memorial apart.

Also notice in this chapter the Saints' reaction to the Civil War. They support the Confederacy simply because it is these forces that are against the United States Government. The Mormons' hope, however, is that the Confederate and Union forces will destroy each other leaving the Mormons' control of the area.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 20, Krakauer returns to his story of Lee and the results of the Mountain Meadow massacre. According to the text, Lee had prophesied that if he was not guilty of the crimes at Mountain Meadow, Brigham Young would die within six months of Lee's execution. As predicted, Brigham Young dies five months after Lee is executed.

John Taylor, the prophet who replaces Brigham Young, is also a staunch supporter of polygamy. Taylor held to his beliefs even after the passage of the Edmunds Act in 1882 that allowed polygamous families to be prosecuted even for unlawful cohabitation. About the time of Taylor's death the government passes legislature that bankrupts the Mormon Church. It is at this point that Wilford Woodruff takes over power of the church. Woodruff at first tells his followers they must give up polygamy. Then, several years later, after supposedly having a nighttime meeting with Jesus and Joseph Smith, Woodruff claims he has been told that plural marriage is a godly principle and it was never intended for the Mormons to stop practicing this principle. It was at this point in the history of the Mormon Church that the true split occurred between modern Mormons, who did not believe in polygamy, and Mormon Fundamentalists, who believe the principle is still sanctioned by God.



Part 4, Chapters 21 - 22

Part 4, Chapters 21 - 22 Summary and Analysis

Krakauer opens this chapter with the Mormons' idea that Rulon Jeffs was the chosen one sent by the Lord. However, it is in this chapter that Krakauer describes the reaction to Uncle Rulon's death. There is fear there may be an uprising of other Mormon sects against those in Colorado City and Bountiful. Warren Jeffs, son of Rulon, has already taken charge of the communities. Warren's idea of power is to motivate his people through fear, not love as his father did. As a result of the people's strong dislike for Warren, there is a belief that Warren will either die early, or that many of these Mormons under his power will split off and form their own sect.

Krakauer traces the roots of Colorado City back to John D. Lee. Lee was banished for his role in the Mountain Meadows massacre. Before Lee was arrested and killed for his crimes, he operated a ferry service for people traveling between Utah, and Arizona and Mexico. Warren Johnson was chosen to keep this ferry service open. One of the children born to Johnson became Uncle Roy. Uncle Roy takes charge of the Colorado City group, while a rival group lead by Rulon Allred. While Uncle Roy's group does not get much public notice, Allred was shot to death as he worked in his office.

Krakauer goes on to describe the clash between brothers Joel and Ervil LeBaron. Ervil is jailed for various crimes. While in jail he writes what is essentially a hit list which is given to Ervil's children. These errant children start to carry out their father's wishes for his death list. Like Ron these children, referred to as the Lambs of God, claims because the murders were ordained by God, they're crimes were justified. The Mexican polygamous community was begun when Joel and Ervil's father, Dayer LeBaron received a commandment to buy land that would come to be known as Colonia LeBaron. The Stubbs family then moved to Colonia LeBaron from the Colorado City settlement. Lavina Stubbs is married to Joel LeBaron, one of the men shot by Ervil's orders. Lavina loses a lot of money in a Ponzi scheme operated by her son-in-law, Kenyon Blackmore, and Bernard Brady. These two men were also among the suspects in the murders of Brenda and Erica Lafferty. While Lavina is not upset with her son-in-law for losing her money, she is angry about what Ken did to her daughter and granddaughter. Kenyon is arrested when his first wife begs him to leave Mexico and come home. Once he is free, Kenyon begins raping his own children, including Lavina's granddaughter Evangeline. Evangeline is abandoned when she miscarries twice. She is rescued by her grandmother. Evangeline reported that Ken hoped to locate an Indian tribe he could fertilize with his "pure" seed.

In Chapter 22, Krakauer continues with his narrative of the events of July 24, 1984. Luckily Chloe Low is not at home. The boys just ransack her house, then leave. They make a wrong turn on the way to Richard Stowe's house, and decide to forget the remainder of the removal revelation. Instead, they drive to Reno, Nevada. They stop at a motel for dinner after they leave Utah. Before they spend the night, Ron tells them



they have to pack up because it is time to go. They are stopped by the Nevada Highway Patrol because their car's taillights are out and it is leaking gas. When they return to the motel to spend the night, Carnes and Knapp decide to take the car and abandon Ron and Dan at the motel. As they drive to the home of Carnes' brother, they throw any criminal evidence they find out the windows. The police find the Impala parked at Carnes' brother's home and arrest Carnes and Knapp.

During this time, Bernard Brady's home is also raided by police looking for evidence in the Lafferty murders. The police find Brady's affidavit stating he had knowledge of Ron's removal revelation. Later the police also find the original copy of the removal revelation in an abandoned house where Ron had once stayed.

When Ron and Dan realize they have been abandoned, they decide to split up and meet again when they reach Nevada. They met at a casino called John Ascuaga's Nugget, then stay in the Reno area for the next two weeks. They finally stop at the Circus Casino and ask for Debbie, a girl with whom they had stayed before. Asking for Debbie is the key that gets them arrested by the FBI as they stand in line for the buffet.



Part 4, Chapter 23

Part 4, Chapter 23 Summary and Analysis

Attention to detail is one aspect of Krakauer's writing that stands out in this section. Just as a good journalist would, he reports the date, day of the week, time, location and even the weather conditions in a way that flows evenly with his story. These details help set the tone for the account that will follow. This is the sentencing hearing for Ron Lafferty. During the hearing, Ron is verbally abusive to the presiding judge. Ron indicates he plans to seek any appeals that might be available to him. It has been seventeen years since Ron was sentenced to die for the murders of Brenda and Erica Lafferty. Brenda's family has been tormented because the trial has been drawn out for so long. Reading Brenda's journals detailing her struggles during her life with Allen, was the hardest emotional strain the family had to face. They wished they had known about her troubles and done something to help her.

It is interesting to note that in his original trial, Ron refused to use an insanity plea, even to avoid a death sentence. In this first trial, Ron is found guilty of two counts of first degree murder. Six years later these court results were thrown out and the case retried. It was determined that the courts made a mistake when they determined Ron was mentally competent to stand trial. At this point, however, the court systems faced a problem. Not only would the outcomes of this second trial possibly change the fate of Ron, but might also set a precedence for the way that violent crimes that were carried out in the name of God would be handled in court from this point forward. By indicating Ron was mentally instable just because he claimed he talked to God would mean any religious person could be termed as insane.

However, after being examined by three doctors, Ron was found unfit to stand for a second trial. After sixteen months in a mental hospital, Ron was tried again for competency and this time found fit to be retried. During the time since his arrest, Dan has become willing to tell his side of the story of the murders. His testimony that Ron was present while the murders were taking place is valuable evidence during this second trial. Although Ron continued to insist that he was not crazy, his lawyers attempt to use an insanity plea to save Ron's life. But again, if the courts find Ron crazy for following what he believes was a command from God, it is unknown what effect this would have on the American government and American people who freely admit they are followers of and believers in God.

Two psychiatrists in this second trial testified that Ron was suffering with a delusional disorder and was therefore unable to understand what he had done or the consequences thereof. Two other psychiatrists, Noel Gardner and Richard Wootton, believed Ron ideas were odd, but merely Ron's interpretation of the things he had been taught as a child. A final psychiatrist, Stephen Golding, testifies that by taking the medical term "delusional" and trying to make it fit a religious society where all participants could be considered delusional was not appropriate. Gardner agrees with



this idea explaining that in Ron's group, The School of the Prophets, it was intended for people to receive revelations from God. Therefore, any revelations that Ron received was a result of intentional seeking, not schizophrenia or another disease of the brain.

Gardner testifies that he believes the reason that Ron's beliefs turned him into a killer is that Ron suffers with narcissistic personality disorder. These people believe they are more important than other people as well as being smarter than others. These people work harder than most others, but they don't have empathy, an understanding of other people's feelings, so they don't have close personal relationships. These people see things in black and white. They are either grandiose, or they are nothing. As a result of Ron's divorce and his excommunication from the Church, Ron would see himself as being belittled and deceived. They believe others should follow the rules, but believe these rules don't apply to them.

After hearing the evidence in the second trial, the jury once again found Ron guilty of first degree murder. When the judge pushes Ron to choose his means of death, Ron chooses the firing squad. Again Ron is sarcastic and verbally abusive toward the judge. It is at this point that Krakauer makes the point that the American justice system, as well as the Mormons, practices the idea of blood atonement. Although Ron filed an appeal, it was refused. Even Ron believes Don will eventually suffer the sentence and be shot to death.



Part 4, Chapters 24 - 26

Part 4, Chapters 24 - 26 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 24, Krakauer first describes the relationship of Ron and Dan Lafferty after their arrest. Although they seem friendly the few times they are in contact with each other, it is noted that Dan has begun to believe that Ron is an offspring of Satan himself. While one might think Dan would believe Ron was a devil for having the revelation and getting him involved in the murders, Dan instead believes Ron is trying to kill him to keep him from carrying out God's revelation. Actually, twice before Ron had made threatening moves toward his brother in one instance breaking Dan's nose and a rib. On another occasion, Ron presented Dan with a revelation from God saying Dan should let Ron kill him. Dan agreed but Ron did not go through with the action. Later Ron again told Dan that God wanted Ron to kill Dan. This time Dan refused to participate. It was after Dan refused to go along with this second attempt by Ron to end his life that Ron hung himself on the towel bar in his cell.

It is interesting in the second section of Chapter 24 that Krakauer makes the statement that most believed Dan was a true believer in God. Despite the fact that his religious views are outlandish and horrifying, it is believed that he did actually have a very strong faith in God. Krakauer writes that in jail Dan has come up with his own religious sect. His beliefs include the idea that he is Elijah and will be used to announce the Second Coming of Christ. He believes that people are either children of God or children of the devil. Dan also sees himself as being one of God's avenging angels called by God to rid the world of the evil that He saw in Brenda and her baby. He believes Ron's revelation to kill him actually came from the devil in an attempt to stop Jesus' Second Coming. Also believes his brother may be suffering with schizophrenia.

Dan believes his is different from other religious fanatics who kill because he believes he committed his murders with an attempt to provide justice while others did not have this same desire. Dan also believes these other murderers were following a false prophet.

In Chapter 25, Krakauer explains is it not only Dan Lafferty but also the entire Mormon faith who believes the end of the earth is coming soon. Harold Bloom writes in his book *American Religion* that he believes the Mormon religion will grow in numbers in America until they have a great deal of political power. Bloom believes it will be at this point that the church will re-sanction the practice of polygamy. Despite this prediction, it is noted that the modern Mormon Church has moved far away from the roots of the early believers. Their move away from polygamy has benefited the church to the point that it is doubtful any modern Mormons would ever want to resurrect this practice.

There are, however, still some who want to return to the fundamentalist ways. Pamela Coronado, one of Robert Crossfield's new followers is one of those who want to return to the roots of Mormonism. Pamela defends her reasoning for joining the UEP by saying



that she loves the spirit of this church, a spirit she believes modern Mormons have lost. It is obvious to see that Pamela has shared her love of her religion to her daughter, Emmylou, whose eye light up as she describes her dream home. This home is set up specifically for a polygamous family.

Finally, in Chapter 26, Krakauer again focuses on DeLoy Bateman, a former member of the Mormon Church. He speaks of the way his religion formerly felt like it controlled him. Although it is hot where he stands on Canaan Mountain, DeLoy still wears the sacramental long underwear sanctioned by the church. He finds that he is unable to not wear the underwear, even when he wants to go without it. Bateman still lives in Colorado City, but he no longer practices polygamy and has turned into a self confessed atheist. Despite his changed beliefs, Bateman defends the Mormons as good, hard working people. He states that he believes the precedence of sexual abuse is less than that in other communities.

DeLoy declares that he believes that religion, in general, is a lie. He has no doubt that those who subscribe to any particular religion sincerely believe in this lie. DeLoy found he could no longer ignore the contradictions between religion and science. DeLoy believes it was his time during his college years that made him first question his religion. He is now surprised at the things that he formerly believed as a member of the Mormon Church. He remembers how easy the religion made all of the hard questions about life. Although he believes the Mormon people are happy, he states that he would rather be able to think for himself than be happy.



Characters

Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith is the most important person in the history of the Mormon Church. Joseph was the creator of and first prophet for the Mormon Church. Joseph based the beliefs of this religion on the text Joseph translated from a golden book given to him by the Angel Moroni. Joseph called his book The Book of Mormon. Joseph leads his people out of Palmyra, New York to Jackson County, Missouri the area Joseph has been told by God is the location of the Garden of Eden. When the Mormons are run out of Missouri, Joseph oversees the establishment of a community called Nauvoo. It is here that Joseph makes a fatal mistake. In response to a pamphlet printed by a believer with a different viewpoint, aimed at disclosing Joseph's polygamous relationships with several women, Joseph has the man's printing press destroyed and his office burned. Knowing he won't get a fair trial, Joseph at first runs from the law. He then surrenders and is jailed with his brother Hyrum in the Carthage jail. The militiamen guarding the jail allow a group of men called the Warsaw Dragoons into the jail. These Dragoons kill Joseph and his brother.

Joseph's original Doctrine and Covenants includes a section that addresses the sanctioning of polygamous relationships. Although there is question whether or not Joseph actually participated in polygamous relationships, Krakauer notes in his book that it is suspected Joseph was "married" to between 33 and 48 women. It is also noted that Joseph tried to introduce the principle of polygamy to his followers on several occasions, but relented when they did not react favorably toward the idea.

Ronald

Ron is the oldest of the Lafferty brothers. He has always had a rebellious streak. Even as a missionary, he displayed this rebellion by refusing to wear the hat and coat that were part of the missionary's uniform. Ron and his wife Dianna had what appeared to be a strong and loving relationship until Ron became involved with his brothers in The School of the Prophets. In fact, Ron's wife sent him to try to talk some sense into his brothers concerning their participation in the school. However, Ron's brothers instead succeeded in proving to Ron that their search for the basics of the Mormon religion was God inspired. Ron's participation in this group changed his personality to the point that his wife divorced him and took their children to Florida. This divorce seems to have affected Ron very deeply. It was at this point that Ron began receiving revelations, which he believed were from God, telling him to kill his sister-in-law and her baby.

Before Ron can stand trial for his crimes, he hangs himself in his cell and is nearly dead when he is discovered. Amazingly, he emerges from a coma and is able to stand trial. During his first trial he is found responsible for the murders of Brenda and Erica Lafferty and is charged with two counts of first degree murder. The results of this first trial are



thrown out and Ron is retried. In this case also he is found guilty of two counts of first degree murder. He is sentenced to die at the hands of a firing squad. During his time in jail Ron develops unusual religious beliefs; however, psychiatrists believe these are just Ron's own interpretations of what he was taught as a child. Ron is deemed as being sane, but suffering with narcissistic personality disorder.

Dan Lafferty

Dan Lafferty is one of Ron's younger brothers and his accomplice in the Lafferty murders. Dan tells police that although it was Ron that received the removal revelation, it was Dan who actually did the killing. Like Ron, Dan is a member of Onias' School of the Prophets. Dan did not receive revelations the way the Ron did. When Ron shows Dan the removal revelation, Dan agrees to help him carry it out.

Since the time of the murders of Brenda and her baby, Dan has told police that he believes that Ron is a child of the devil. He believes this way because Ron has tried on several occasions to kill Dan. While in jail, Dan has developed the misguided opinion that he is the one whom God has chosen to announce the end of the world. Dan believes that if Ron succeeds in killing him, the devil will believe he has outsmarted God. By doing away with the one sent to announce the ending of the world, it is believed that the world will never end.

During his trial Dan is found guilty of two counts of first degree murder. When Dan suggests his jury put him to death, they instead decide to sentence him to life in prison. During his time in jail, Dan becomes very cooperative. In fact, he testifies freely at Ron's trial about Ron's part in the murders.

Richard

Ricky Knapp is a drifter who happens to be traveling with Ron and Dan the summer that they murder Brenda and Erica. He is one of two men sitting in the car outside Allen and Brenda's apartment when Ron and Dan commit the murders. Dan meets Knapp while the two are working together on a construction site in Wichita, Kansas. Knapp has just gotten out of jail and has no place to stay so Dan offers to let him sleep in the Impala with him. Knapp takes Dan to a marijuana field where they collect a bag of low grade marijuana that they take with them on the remainder of their road trip. Knapp leaves with Carnes and abandons the Lafferty brothers at the motel after the murders are committed.

Chip Carnes

Chip Carnes is another drifter who joined the Lafferty brothers on their road trip prior to the murders of Brenda and Erica Lafferty. Carnes joins the group when the Laffertys attempt to help Carnes get his car, on which the brakes had failed, to a repair shop.



Once they reach the shop, Carnes does not have enough money to fix his car, so he sells it and joins the Laffertys.

Interestingly Carnes is the only one of the group who were present at the murders that tells a different story from the rest of the group. He testifies that Ron killed Brenda while Dan killed the baby. It is noted, however, that Carnes was threatened with a death sentence if he did not produce evidence that would help get a first degree murder conviction for both of the Lafferty brothers.

Allen Lafferty

Allen Lafferty is the youngest of the Lafferty brothers. He was the only one of the brothers who was not a member of the School of the Prophets. Allen was the husband of Brenda Lafferty and father of Erica. It is indicated that Allen was abusive toward Brenda and that at least one time she had contemplated leaving him. Allen is aware that his brother's removal revelation includes both his wife and his daughter, but does not mention this fact to his wife. Allen is the one who discovers the bodies of both his wife and his daughter after they are killed. When he finds the two, he knows immediately who it was that committed the crime.

Noel Gardner

Noel Gardner is one of the psychiatrists in Ron's second trial. He believes Ron is not insane, but simply has odd labels and beliefs about common religious teachings. He points out that Ron is both sociable, and enjoys reading, two things that schizophrenics are not able to do. Gardner also points out that in Ron's group, it was the norm to receive instructions from God. Therefore, it is not insane to do something considered normal for one's own group.

Brenda Wright Lafferty

Brenda was the woman murdered by Ron and Dan Lafferty when she was 24 years old. Brenda was the wife of Allen Lafferty and the mother of Erica. Although Brenda worked hard to keep her marriage together she admitted to others that she realized shortly into her marriage to Allen that she had made a mistake. It was at this point that she realized how unusual the Lafferty family's religious beliefs were. In fact, at the point that her baby becomes sick and Allen will not let Brenda take her to the doctor, Brenda believes her in-laws are evil.

It is Brenda who encourages Dianna to seek a divorce when Ron becomes so deeply involved in the School of the Prophets. Brenda will also not allow Allen to be a part of this school. She also closely watches how much time he spends with his brothers and tries to keep tabs on what they talk about. Brenda is one of the people listed on Ron Lafferty's removal revelation. He believes he is justified in murdering Brenda because



she interfered in the Lord's work by keeping Allen out of the School of the Prophets and encouraging Dianna to leave Ron.

Erica Lane Lafferty

Erica Lane Lafferty is just 15 months old when she is murdered by her uncle. Although others had tried to talk Ron out of murdering the innocent baby he insisted she had to be killed also. First, she was listed on the removal revelation. Second, she was likely to grow up to be a strong and outspoken female, like her mother. Third, with her mother dead, the baby would be motherless so it would be better to kill the child also. As the men beat her mother, Erica calls for her mommy from her crib.

DeLoy Bateman

DeLoy Bateman is a former Mormon and Science teacher at Colorado City High School. He says that it was when he began to acquire knowledge that he began to realize the inconsistencies in his own religion. When the reader first meets DeLoy, he has just been excommunicated from the Mormon Church. He is a practicing polygamist with two wives and numerous children. At the end of the book, however, DeLoy's ideas have changed and he has become a self-professed atheist. Although he still resides in the Colorado City community, DeLoy no longer practices polygamy. DeLoy makes the statement that religion makes people happy because it provides answers to some of life's hard questions. He says, however, that he believes that being able to think for one's own self is more important than being happy.

Robert Crossfield/Prophet Onias

Robert Crossfield is the writer of the Second Book of Commandments. As a result of this book Crossfield is excommunicated from both the Mormon and the Fundamentalist Mormon Churches. It is Crossfield who heads the School of the Prophets of which Ron and Dan are members. It is under Crossfield's leadership that Ron receives the removal revelation.

Bernard Brady

Bernard Brady is another member of the School of the Prophets along with Ron and Dan Lafferty. Brady knew about the removal revelation but did not warn anyone about what Ron planned to do. He instead wrote an affidavit stating that he was aware of the revelation but that he had nothing to do with any action taken on the revelation.



Warren Jeffs

Warren Jeffs is the prophet who takes over control of Colorado City and Bountiful when his father "Uncle Rulon" dies in 2002. The people don't have the affectionate relationship with him as they did with either Rulon or Roy. Jeffs controls his people through fear and dread. Many of the Mormons under his control do not respect him and long for the day when his rule will be over.

Rulon T.

"Uncle Rulon" is the leader of the polygamous sects in Colorado City and Bountiful. He is believed to be the one mighty and strong as prophesied by Joseph Smith. Some people believed this prophet would live forever. Rulon took over control of the UEP in 1986, he died September 8, 2002. It was reported that he had 75 wives and at least 65 children. One of these children is Warren Jeffs who become leader in Colorado City and Bountiful when his father dies.

LeRoy

LeRoy Johnson is the prophet who preceded Uncle Rulon as the prophet, or leader, of Colorado City. LeRoy preached that the only way to heaven was through total obedience. He was the leader of the UEP 1954 until 1986.



Objects/Places

Utah County

Utah County is the county where the Lafferty family lived and where the murders of Brenda Lafferty and her baby occurred. Utah County is located in the state of Utah and is considered to be the heartland of the Mormon religion.

American Fork

American Fork is the suburb in which Allen Lafferty and his wife Brenda lived prior to the murders of Brenda and her baby.

July 24, 1984

July 24, 1984 is the day on which Erica and Brenda Lafferty were killed.

July 24, 1847

July 24, 1847 is the day when Brigham Young and his followers reached the Great Salt Lake Valley and began erecting their city. It is known among the Mormons as Pioneer Day.

A Pale Green 1974 Impala Station Wagon with Utah Plates

This is the description of the car Ron Lafferty was driving when he murdered Brenda and Erica Lafferty. The police put out an APB for this vehicle after the deaths are discovered.

Circus Circus Casino

The Circus Circus Casino is the place where Ron and Dan were arrested on August 7 as they stood in line for the dinner buffet.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the official name of the Mormon Church. This church was formally established in April of 1830 by Joseph Smith.



Temple Square

Temple Square is considered to be the holiest spot for those who practice the beliefs of the Latter-day Saints. Temple Square is located in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Mormon Fundamentalism (FLDS)

Mormon Fundamentalists are those who claim to follow the original beliefs of the Mormon Church. These beliefs include the practice of polygamy.

Section 132 of The Doctrine and Covenants

This is the section of the Mormon doctrine that addresses the importance of polygamy in the life of the Mormon.

Utah War

A war between the United States Army and the Mormons in which President James Buchanan intended to remove power from Brigham Young and end polygamy.

Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887

This act disincorporated the Mormon Church and caused the renunciation of polygamy, at least on the surface.

UEP

The United Effort Plan, UEP, is another term used to refer to the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Law of Chastity

This law states that sex is forbidden between husband and wife unless the woman is ovulating.

The Book of Immanuel David Isaiah

This book is a pamphlet written by Brian David Mitchell, the man who kidnapped Elizabeth Smart, about a new fundamentalist Mormon Church.



Golden Plates

These plates were supposedly inscribed with the beliefs of the Mormon faith as handed down to Joseph Smith by God through the angel Moroni.

Hill Cumorah

Hill Cumorah is the hill on which the golden plates were hidden. It is now considered one of the most holy of locations in the Mormon faith. It is on this hill that a pageant is performed each year telling the story of the Mormon faith

The Doctrine and Covenants

The Doctrine and Covenants includes new revelations and commandments given to Joseph since The Book of Mormon.

The Second Book of Commandments

The Second Book of Commandments is another book of revelations written by Robert Crossfield, also known as the Prophet Onias.

Brigham Young University

Brigham Young University is located in Provo, Utah. This university is owned and controlled by the LDS Church.

Dream Mine

The Dream Mine is a mine where the Mormons believe all of the gold belonging to the Nephites is hidden. They believe this gold will be found in time for the Mormons to use it to live through the tumultuous time before the apocalypse.

Onias' School of the Prophets

This School of the Prophets was created by Crossfield. The group included four of the five Lafferty brothers. The main focus of this school was to teach followers how to receive divine revelations.



The Peace Maker

The Peace Maker is a pamphlet that uses Biblical references to defend the practice of polygamy. It was after Dan read this tract that he decided to try to implement the principles it taught in his own household.

The Garden of Eden

The Garden of Eden is believed to be the place where Adam and Eve, the first humans created by God, lived before the inception of sin. Although most religious beliefs place the Garden of Eden somewhere in the Middle East, the Mormons believe the Garden of Eden was located in Jackson County, Missouri.

Haun's Mill

Haun's Mill was a Mormon settlement where 18 Mormons were killed during an ambush by the Missouri Militia.

Nauvoo

Nauvoo is the city the Mormons erected on the banks of the Mississippi River after they were run out of Illinois.

Warsaw Dragoons

The Warsaw Dragoons were a group of about 125 militiamen who stormed the jail where Joseph Smith was being held. These men shot and killed both Joseph and his brother.

City of Refuge

This City of Refuge was to be a city built at the base of the Dream Mine where the faithful Mormons could spend their last days on earth before the Second Coming of Christ.

June 28, 1844

June 28, 1844 is the date of Joseph Smith's death.



1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

It was with the enactment of this treaty that the land in the current state of Utah, on which the Mormons were living, became part of the United States.

Mountain Meadow Massacre

The Mountain Meadow massacre was a massacre in which the Mormons killed the people traveling in a large, affluent wagon train on its way to California.

Massive, Crude Monument With a Cross on Top

After discovering the remains of those killed in the Mountain Meadows Massacre major James H. Carleton and his soldiers collected and buried these remains. They created this monument on top of the group grave. Later the monument was destroyed by Brigham Young and his followers.

Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act

The Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in an attempt to end the practice of polygamy in the United States.

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

Narcissistic Personality Disorder is the personality disorder with which Ron Lafferty was diagnosed.

Deseret

Deseret was Brigham Young's new name for Utah after he declared it an independent state.



Themes

Polygamy

The question of the practice of polygamy is one that has haunted the Mormon Church since its inception. Although modern Mormons do not practice polygamy, there are still sects of the Mormon Church, fundamentalists in particular, that do still view polygamy as a way of life sanctioned by God. There are also polygamous communities located in Canada, Mexico and even the United States. The polygamous groups in the United States get away with this illegal practice by only legally marrying one wife. The others are married in ceremonies seen by the Mormons as marriage ceremonies, but not accepted by the United States government as legal unions.

The first major debate over polygamy involved Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon religion. In the 132nd section of the Doctrine and Covenants, it is indicated that God intended his people to live in polygamous relationships. It is indicated that Joseph tried to introduce his people to the idea of polygamy, but when they didn't seem to be willing, he would back away from the idea. However, Krakauer writes in his book that Joseph was already practicing multiple marriages and had taken several wives. Even at the time of Joseph's murder, the large majority of Mormons did not realize their leader had more than one wife.

One of the horrors of polygamous marriages involved the Mormons' practice not only of requiring their wives to be subservient, but also their habit of marrying their girls off at a young age. The information in Krakauer's book indicates some girls are forced to marry at the age of twelve or thirteen. These arranged marriages do not allow the girls to have any choice in the man to whom they are married. The girls are often raped and sometimes abused by their older husbands.

Polygamy was a practice that also came into play in the relationships between the Lafferty boys and their wives. For instance, it was when Ron decided to marry his daughters off in polygamous relationships that Dianna decided to leave her husband. Dan's wife, Matilda, on the other hand, stayed with her husband when he decided to take his step-daughter as a plural wife. She was told that if she left Dan, she would also have to leave her children.

Blood Atonement

Blood Atonement is an important theme in this book. In fact, it is this principle that the Lafferty brothers believe justify their murders of Brenda and Erica Lafferty. Like the principle of polygamy, however, this principle of blood atonement has also been disposed of by the modern Mormon Church. According to the principle of blood atonement those who had committed grievous crimes against the Mormon Church could justifiably be killed to avenge their wrongs. This doctrine was supported by both Joseph



Smith and Brigham Young. The Mormons believed there were some sins so bad that they could not be forgiven or washed clean of their sins, even by the blood of Christ. Most Christian religions believe that there is no sin that cannot be forgiven by God if the sinner confesses and has his sin "washed" clean in the blood of Jesus. In the case of an unforgivable sin, the Mormons believe the only way to atone for their sin was to have their own blood shed.

Krakauer makes an interesting point during his description of the court session in which Ron is sentenced for his role in the deaths of Brenda and Erica Lafferty. In this session, the judge orders Ron put to death by shooting at the hands of a firing squad. Krakauer makes the point that Ron is condemned to the same punishment to which Brenda Lafferty is condemned by Ron. He is ordered dead because of the believed grievousness of his crimes. Krakauer writes that this sentence indicates that although the Mormons may have abandoned the principle of blood atonement, the United States Justice system has not.

The Coming of the One Mighty and Strong

One phrase that reverberates throughout this book is the statement that there is one "mighty and strong" coming to reform the Mormon Church. In Joseph's Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord promises he will send this prophet to His people. There have been a variety of interpretations of this passage as well as a number of guesses as to whom this prophet might be. The fundamentalists believe this prophet will restore the principle of polygamy to the church. Those who lived in Colorado City believed Uncle Rulon T. Jeffs was the one mighty and strong. These people were deeply disappointed when their beloved prophet died.

In his pamphlet entitled "The Book of Immanuel David Isaiah" Brian David Mitchell writes that it is he who is the one mighty and strong. It is also mentioned in Krakauer's writing that Robert Crossfield may have believed that he was the one might and strong. John W. Bryant also preached to his people that he was the prophet that God had promised to Joseph and the Mormon people. Ron Lafferty had a revelation telling him that there was not just one person who was the one mighty and strong, but instead several of these people had been sent to reform the church. Ron believed he was one of these people. Likewise Benjamin LeBaron insisted he was the one mighty and strong. As a result he was committed to an insane asylum. Although many people have claimed to be, or have been thought to be, the prophet mighty and strong, it appears that as of yet, no prophet meeting the criteria of the long awaited person has yet come forth.



Style

Perspective

Although it is uncertain if Krakauer is affiliated with the Mormons, it is obvious that he has done much research on the topic of their religion. It can be determined through the text that Krakauer has spent much time reading about the Mormon religion as well as talking with the Mormons themselves about their religion. Krakauer presents details of the historical development of the religion from its birth to modern times. He also describes how the fundamentalists, such as the Laffertys, have come to hold the beliefs that they hold as a result of their attempt to return to the root beliefs of their religion.

Krakauer's writing style could almost be termed "journalistic" as he seeks to describe the circumstances that have led to the creation of people willing to believe God wants them to kill others. It is clear that he has interviewed both Ron and Dan Lafferty while in jail. Krakauer has also interviewed Robert Crossfield, the man who was instrumental in teaching Ron how to receive revelations from God. Information in the text also shows that Krakauer has also spoken with members of the Mormon religion who have separated from their beliefs. These personal experiences with the people about whom he writes makes Krakauer a believable historian and show the extent to which he is determined to show a realist picture of the people about whom he writes.

Tone

The tone of this novel is very objective. Although Krakauer deals with a very emotional subject, the murder of a young mother and her baby, he manages to keep his writing detached from this emotion. In fact, Krakauer presents his story almost as if he were writing for a newspaper. He includes many facts in this well-researched novel. In addition to his research of historical papers, government documents and court recordings, Krakauer also interviews his subjects face to face. It is easy to tell Krakauer has spoken with these people, usually in their own environment, because of the descriptions that he uses. For instance, he speaks of riding with DeLoy Bateman and seeing the satellite dishes that people have attempted to dispose of in the desert. It also appears that Krakauer was with Bateman when he and his family discovered the 132-year-old signature of William Dunn on the stone located on top of Mount Dellenbaugh.

It is important to keep in mind when reading this novel, however, that Krakauer's writing, though very objective, does not encompass all Mormons. The novel seeks to examine those with violent religious beliefs, and in this case, those are the ones who have tried to return to the roots of their religious beliefs. Therefore, Krakauer explores mostly the early beliefs and experiences of the Mormon Church, along with Mormon Fundamentalists of the day. This work does not describe Mormons in general, only the fundamentalists.

Structure

The novel is divided into four different parts with each part being divided into chapters. Each of these chapters is introduced with at least one quote that is related to the subject matter. Although each part bears only a numerical title, the chapters bear a title that gives the reader some idea what that chapter's material will be about. The majority of the text of the novel is expository with little dialogue. The majority of the dialogue that does occur in the novel occurs in the parts where Krakauer includes information about the people that he has interviewed.

Krakauer does not present his material in a linear timeline. He instead begins his story, in the prologue, with a description of the murders of Brenda and Erica Lafferty. After this initial introduction of his topic, Krakauer then jumps back and forth through time as he tells his story of the Mormons. For instance, Krakauer writes in the relative present as he details his trip to Mount Dellenbaugh with the Bateman family. Krakauer then takes his reader on a trip back in time more than 100 years when he writes about the ill-fated travels of William Dunn and his companions.



Quotes

"They assumed he was the murderer; the husband usually is. By and by, however, Allen convinced them that the prime suspect was actually the oldest of his five brothers, Ron Lafferty." Prologue, pg. xiii

"He still insists that he is innocent of any crime but, paradoxically, does not deny that he killed Brenda or Erica. When asked to explain how both these apparently contradictory statements can be true, he says, 'I was doing God's will, which is not a crime.'" Prologue, pg. xx

"There is a dark side to religious devotion that is too often ignored or denied." Prologue, pg. xxi

"It is the aim of this book to cast some light on Lafferty and his ilk." Prologue, pg. xxiii

"Mormon authorities treat the fundamentalists as they would a crazy uncle - they try to keep the "polygs" hidden in the attic, safely out of sight, but the fundamentalists always seem to be sneaking out to appear in public at inopportune moments to create unsavory scenes, embarrassing the entire LDS clan." Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 3

"Despite the fact that Uncle Rulon and his followers regard the governments of Arizona, Utah, and the United States as Satanic forces out to destroy the UEP, their polygamous community receives more than \$6 million a year in public funds." Part 1, Chapter 2, pg.10

"Mormonism is a patriarchal religion, rooted firmly in the traditions of the Old Testament. Dissent isn't tolerated. Questioning the edicts of religious authorities is viewed as a subversive act that undermines faith." Part 1, Chapter 3, pg. 31

"As for Brian David Mitchell, in the days following his arrest he steadfastly insisted that he had done nothing wrong, arguing that forcing a fourteen-year-old girl into polygamous bondage was not a criminal act because it was a "call from God." Part 1, Chapter 4, pg. 48

"To comprehend Brian David Mitchell - or to comprehend Dan Lafferty, or Tom Green, or the polygamous inhabitants of Bountiful and Colorado City - one must first understand the faith these people have in common, a faith that gives shape and purpose to every facet of their lives." Part 1, Chapter 5, pg. 53

"In fact, Watson Lafferty was a formidable disciplinarian who did not hesitate to beat the living tar out of his children or his wife, Claudine, to enforce his rules." Part 1, Chapter 8, pg. 86

"After Dan Lafferty read The Peace Maker and resolved to start living the principle of plural marriage, he announced to his wife, Matilda, that he intended to wed her oldest daughter - his stepdaughter." Part 2, Chapter 13, pg. 135



"Living according to the strictures laid down in The Peace Maker felt good to Dan - it felt right, as though this really was the way God intended men and women to live." Part 2, Chapter 13, pg. 135

"And Dan learned that Joseph had taught that the laws of God take precedence over the laws of men." Part 2, Chapter 13, pg. 135

"The impetus for most fundamentalist movements - whether Mormon, Catholic, Evangelical Christian, Muslim, or Jewish - is a yearning to return to the mythical order and perfection of the original church." Part 2, Chapter 13, pg. 137

"Although his father's violent outbursts scarred all the Lafferty children to some degree, Ron - who had an especially close relationship with his perpetually downtrodden mother - seems to have suffered the greatest emotional damage." Part 2, Chapter 14, pg. 143

"In the space of a few hours, Dan had converted Ron from a dutiful Saint into a fire-breathing Mormon Fundamentalist. Dianna told her friend Penelope Weiss that when Ron returned home late that night, 'a totally different man walked in the door.'" Part 2, Chapter 14, pg. 146

"After Dan persuaded his brothers to adopt his fundamentalist beliefs, all their wives acquiesced and submitted, to one degree or another, to the humiliations decreed in The Peace Maker - all their wives, that is, except one: Brenda Wright Lafferty. Intelligent, articulate, and assertive, 'Brenda stood up to those Lafferty boys,' says her mother, LaRae Wright. 'She was probably the youngest of the wives, but she was the strong one.'" Part 2, Chapter 14, pg. 148

"The Lafferty boys didn't like Brenda, because she got in their way." Part 2, Chapter 14, pg. 149

"They believed they had found, in Onias, a crucial ally in their struggle to restore the church of Joseph Smith to righteousness and prepare the earth for the Second Coming of Christ." Part 2, Chapter 15, pg. 158

"The departure of his wife and six children to a distant corner of the nation gnawed at him day and night. Over time his hurt was transformed into an implacable rage, and most of that anger was directed at the three individuals who, in his estimation, bore responsibility for Dianna's decision to abandon him: Richard Stowe, Chloe Low, and Brenda Lafferty." Part 2, Chapter 15, pg. 159

"But the school's main thrust, as Onias had conceived it, was to teach the faithful how to receive and interpret revelations from God, and as the winter of 1984 edged toward spring, Ron began receiving this instruction in earnest." Part 2, Chapter 15, pg. 160

"In Dr. Groesbeck's learned opinion, this revelation was a delusional artifact, as were all Ron's revelations, spawned by depression and his deeply entrenched narcissism, with no basis whatsoever in reality." Part 2, Chapter 15, pg. 162



"But Allen never bothered to tell Brenda of his brothers' declared intent to murder her and their baby." Part 2, Chapter 15, pg. 169

"Twelve hours earlier the Mormon prophet had been shot dead in the Carthage jail by a band of Illinois militiamen, despite Governor Thomas Ford's personal promise that Joseph would be protected from harm." Part 3, Chapter 17, pg. 191

"The contenders fell into two camps: those bitterly opposed to polygamy, who saw Joseph's death as an opportunity to eradicate the practice before it gained traction, and those who had already taken plural wives and regarded polygamy as a divinely ordained principle that must be sustained." Part 3, Chapter 17, pg. 192

"During the bleak, chaotic days that followed Joseph's murder, 95 percent of Mormons still had no clue that their prophet had married more than one wife and had declared plural marriage to be one of the most crucial keys to gaining entry to the Kingdom of Heaven." Part 3, Chapter 17, pg. 193

"The fact that polygamy was a felony everywhere else in the Union did not impress Brigham. In his view the laws of God took precedence over the laws of men - particularly the laws of Gentile men." Part 3, Chapter 17, pg. 205

"From the time Rutherford B. Hayes moved into the Oval Office in 1877 through the end of Grover Cleveland's term in 1897, each successive American president increased pressure on the Mormon Church to forsake polygamy and submit to the laws of the land." Part 3, Chapter 20, pg. 250

"Because each of their victims had been killed as an act of blood atonement, the Lambs explained, the exterminations were justified in the eyes of the Lord." Part 4, Chapter 21, pg. 269

"Whether Ron lived or died would hinge entirely on whether a jury could be convinced that his religious beliefs - including his certainty that God had commanded the removal of Brenda and Eric Lafferty - were not only sincerely held but also so extreme as to be a delusional artifact of a diseased mind." Part 4, Chapter 23, pg. 295

"In the view of psychiatrists and psychologists, any individual who proclaims to be a prophet or guru - who claims to communicate with God - is, almost by default, mentally or emotionally unbalanced to some degree." Part 4, Chapter 23, pg. 307

"'That's clear,' said the judge, and then sentenced Ron to be shot to death for his crimes - underscoring the fact that Mormon Fundamentalists are by no means the only modern Americans who believe in blood atonement." Part 4, Chapter 23, pg. 309

"Despite the cordial exchange in Judge Hansen's court, by 1995 Dan had come to believe that Ron was a "child of the devil" - an agent of Satan who was bound and determined to kill Dan in order to prevent him from fulfilling the rest of the vital mission God has given Dan to carry out." Part 4, Chapter 24, pg. 311

"Most folks in Utah regard Dan Lafferty's theology as both preposterous and horrifying, but they concede that he seems to be a true believer." Part 4, Chapter 24, pg. 313



Topics for Discussion

Consider the idea that Krakauer intended to use his book to try to explain Lafferty and those like him. Do you believe Krakauer fulfilled his intentions? Why or why not?

Research Mormons and Mormonism. Do you believe the people of this religion are presented fairly in this book? Why or why not?

Consider Ron's revelations. Do you believe they were from God? Defend your answer.

According to this book, the Mormon religion has had a violent history since its conception. Mormons were both the victims of and perpetrators of horrific cruelty. Do you believe this history of violence had some affect on Lafferty's mind set and his actions? Why or why not?

The Christian Bible lists many references of encounters with God and angels. Although many people believe these encounters actually occurred, they have trouble believing that Joseph Smith had an encounter with God. Why do you believe this is? Explain your answer.

Why is Mormonism considered to be an American religion? Support your answer with specific examples.

Trace the controversy of polygamy through the history of Mormonism. Why was this principle such a stumbling block to the religion? Do you believe this principle was really God endorsed, why or why not?

Consider the predicament of the judge and jury in the Lafferty case. How would one attempt to determine if a man has had a revelation from God telling him to do something? If the judge decided Ron Lafferty was insane because he heard the voice of God, the judge would basically set the precedence that all those who believed they could communicate with God (i.e. all Christians) were also insane. Do you believe the judge did an appropriate job with the Lafferty trial? Why or why not?