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Making the White Man's West

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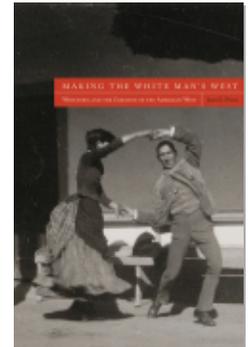
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UNWELCOME SAINTS

Whiteness, Mormons, and the Limits of Success

Whiteness influenced the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in two important ways. First, the Mormons attempted to convert souls across the globe with little blatant regard for issues of race and ethnicity. Yet invisible boundaries of language, culture, and religion limited their success. At times they saw great harvests of new believers, particularly in Protestant Northern Europe. Other times, especially in Southern Europe and the Middle East, their proselytizing fell on deaf ears. Occasionally, they found success in places like the Polynesian islands that surprised even them.

Initially, Mormon theology preached that all believers should congregate on the New Jerusalem the Mormons carved from the Utah desert, but such a pronouncement proved impractical, despite Mormons' best efforts to finance passage for fellow believers. Pacific Islanders, for example, remained in their native lands, but many European converts eventually made the journey across the ocean and the Great Plains. The result of these forces was the creation of a new homeland between the towering Wasatch Front and the Great Salt Lake, a homeland where the entire population was composed of Anglo-Americans

and Northern European converts. Utah's racial makeup, therefore, was not a conscious effort to promote one racial or ethnic group over another (indeed, with the exception of their feelings regarding Africans, Mormons were no more discriminatory than the average American toward non-whites) but rather a by-product of successful conversion efforts among Northern Europeans. It would long remain one of the whitest places in the nation and a stronghold of peoples of Northern European ancestry, but Utah's overwhelming whiteness had arisen largely by accident.

Whiteness influenced Mormons in another, more negative way. The sect, as it grew in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, fascinated and repelled non-Mormon Americans for its creative and scandalous interpretations of Christianity, its invention of a newer testament to the life of Jesus after his crucifixion, the alleged direct revelation from God that its leaders received, and especially the practice of polygamy. Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for example, declared polygamy "a slavery which debases and degrades womanhood, motherhood, and family." While such denunciations said more about non-Mormon values than about those of Mormons, they nevertheless helped marshal a near-universal dislike for the practice and for Mormons more generally.¹

Most converts to Mormonism in the nineteenth century hailed from the nations of Northern Europe: England, Scotland, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries. These converts could therefore be counted among the most desirable potential immigrants, the very hardworking and often rural people railroads in particular coveted. Yet critics asserted that any person, regardless of race, who submitted to the authoritarian and polygamous church could not be truly white because whiteness implied independence and free will. By converting to Mormonism, these converts essentially forfeited their whiteness, becoming almost slaves to the leaders of the church.

Mormons therefore dealt with derision from outsiders and limitations of culture that stymied their efforts to spread the gospel. Both would indelibly shape this community of believers. Despite these obstacles, the church appealed to those who sought something new and more meaningful in their lives, and it grew rapidly. Jules Remy, a French traveler, discussed the success of Mormon missionaries in his 1861 travelogue, *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City*. Barely thirty years had passed since the advent of Mormonism, but the sect had established an impressive census of followers. He wrote, "The

success of the [Mormon] missionaries is far from being the same in every part of the world where they preach their doctrine. Their finest harvests have been reaped in Great Britain, in the north of Europe, particularly Denmark. In Oceania they cite with pride the Sandwich Islands as the spot in which their labours have had great and rapid success." Conversely, he claimed that comparatively few converts came from the native-born American population and were "almost exclusively [from] the class of the newly-arrived emigrants. This significant fact is the most decisive proof that it is not liberty, but ignorance, which delivers up men [to Mormonism]." Finally, he claimed that virtually no immigrants came from the Catholic world and that Mormonism could flourish only where Protestantism had already taken root: "Up to this day the sects which admit the Bible as the fundamental and indeed only rule of their faith, are precisely those which furnish the largest contingent to the Church of Joseph Smith. In Catholic countries, where the Bible is of course a revered book, but only possessed of secondary importance, the number of neophytes who join the Mormons is comparatively insignificant, as if the authority to which they submit rendered them less susceptible of being led away by innovation."²

Remy provided a rough census of Mormon believers in 1859. Most American Saints, as the Mormons called themselves, lived in Utah (80,000) and Joseph Smith's home state of New York (10,000). Overseas, England and Scotland had perhaps 32,000, the Sandwich and Society Islands counted 7,000, and 5,000 lived in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark as compared with 500 in France and perhaps 50 in Italy.³ While Remy, like most outsiders, ridiculed Mormonism, his census numbers probably reflected reality. The Mormons indeed had far more success in Northern Europe than in Southern Europe, as well as among Pacific Islanders. Very specific reasons accounted for success at winning converts to the doctrines of the Latter-day Saints (LDS), reasons, as Remy suggested, that had much to do with the cultural environments in which Mormon missionaries found themselves.

Mormon conversion efforts flowed from their theology, especially the belief that hidden among all the world's races lived a few chosen people who, in fact, had descended from the ancient Israelites. Africans and African Americans were the only exceptions to this belief, as they were allegedly descendants of Cain and carried that mark of unforgivable sin with them for all time. Christianity, of course, begat Mormonism, and so the LDS drew

off of mainstream Christian theology, but members broke with the Pauline belief that anyone could convert to the gospel and instead endorsed the Old Testament idea of a chosen people of God. Christianity derived from both the Old Testament (the story of the founding of Israel and the special place Jews occupied as a chosen people of God) and the New Testament, which told of the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, who would redeem humanity. The former stressed a blood relationship—only God's chosen people, the Jews, could expect to receive God's love—while the latter offered everyone the opportunity to convert to Christianity and be redeemed.

Early Mormonism, however, stressed that believers were blood descendants of the tribes of Israel. As these tribes scattered around the globe, they proliferated and passed their blood on to their descendants. These blood descendants could therefore be found among any group of people or any nation, including non-white groups like American Indians and Pacific Islanders. In practice, however, their theology allowed for the conversion of almost anyone because these lost children of Israel dwelled among larger ethnic and racial groups. The proof for Mormons that a person had the blood of ancient Israel in his or her veins was whether the individual accepted Mormonism. This therefore allowed for wide proselytizing while maintaining the belief in a special individual and group identity. In some ways these doctrines proved to be ethnically and racially blind, and Mormon missionaries did not explicitly promote whiteness.

The belief that Mormons belonged to a special group that had the blood of ancient Israel flowing through their veins helped make sense of their place in the world and enabled them to endure the trials and tribulations they faced. Harried and persecuted by non-believers, Mormons could look to the story of the Israelites, who also faced hardship and persecution, for solace. Not surprisingly, Mormons eagerly sought to reach out to Jews, who obviously had a blood connection to ancient Israel, but their attempts were rejected.

Like other Christian denominations, the Mormons hoped to win converts among supposedly savage peoples, but Mormons believed American Indians had a special destiny to fulfill in the building of their church. Given that no European had heard of the Americas before 1492, it took a good deal of explaining to show that Indians constituted one of the lost tribes of Israel, but Joseph Smith stressed that fact in the *Book of Mormon*. Unlike other denominations that sought to introduce Christianity to the Indians,

the Mormons believed they were, in fact, bringing Christianity back to the Indians centuries after the word of God had been lost.

Mormons considered Native Americans to be descendants of Laman, the prodigal son of Lehi, a prophet and patriarch in the *Book of Mormon*. Lehi migrated from Jerusalem to the Western Hemisphere, according to Mormon doctrine, around 600 BC. Breaking with his father and younger brother, Nephi, Laman and his followers became a separate group of darker-skinned peoples. The appearance of Jesus Christ in the New World (after his crucifixion in the Old World) led to a temporary reconciliation between the two groups. In AD 231, however, a war between the Lamanites and the Nephites ended in the extermination of the Nephites and ultimately the loss of the gospel of Jesus in the New World. The winners of this war became modern Native Americans, according to Mormon theology. The history of this lost tribe of Israel and the story of Jesus coming to the Indians was, Joseph Smith claimed, hidden away on golden tablets—the tablets he discovered and then translated and published as the *Book of Mormon*. Smith intended his discovery of these tablets to go beyond simply resurrecting this lost religious history. He hoped to bring the gospel back to the Indians and get their help in building the New Jerusalem, as foretold in the *Book of Mormon*. Lamanite participation in Mormonism therefore promised to be a key component of its ultimate success.⁴

These religious beliefs led to a concerted effort to proselytize among the Indians from the earliest days of Mormonism's nineteenth-century founding. Indeed, the title page of the *Book of Mormon* describes it as the "record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel."⁵ In 1830, the same year as the publication of the *Book of Mormon*, the church called a group of LDS elders (including the influential Parley P. Pratt) to preach to Native Americans, founding what came to be called the Lamanite mission. The missionaries arrived in Independence, Missouri, in January 1831 and proceeded from there to Delaware settlements in modern Kansas.

Converting the Lamanites proved difficult, however, and despite a century of missionary activities, Indian peoples were largely indifferent to missionary efforts.⁶ The few who did convert, according to scholars who criticize the Lamanite mission, occupied subservient positions in Mormon society.⁷ Yet other dark-skinned tribal peoples seemed willing to embrace Mormonism,

including Polynesian Islanders, and the LDS church soon expanded its definition of Lamanites to include them. This boundary expansion, the sociologist Armand Mauss observes, came about because of increasing missionary success in Polynesia as well as Central and South America a bit later.⁸ Mormon theological evolution therefore followed Mormon missionary success.

The establishment of the Mormon church in the Pacific began on May 11, 1843, when Joseph Smith called Addison Pratt to lead a mission into the Pacific. Pratt was chosen because he had been a sailor in the Pacific and had spent time in Hawaii.⁹ Fellow missionaries Benjamin Franklin Grouard, Noah Rogers, and Knowlton F. Hanks accompanied Pratt. They probably intended to sail for Hawaii, but finding no ship heading there from San Francisco, they instead sailed for French Polynesia. Hanks died from tuberculosis only a month into the journey, but the other three missionaries successfully landed on the island of Tubuai in April 1844. Missionaries from the London Missionary School (LMS) had already been active on the island, and the natives had acquired some familiarity with the basic tenets of Christianity. This undoubtedly helped Pratt in his efforts (although the LMS missionaries were not pleased to see the Mormons arrive). So, too, did the presence of several white settlers, mostly former sailors who had taken wives from among the native population. Pratt won his first converts from these white settlers. By the end of 1844 Pratt had converted a third of the tiny island's population, including all but one white resident.¹⁰ While small in number, these converts' enthusiasm encouraged continued efforts.

Elders Rogers and Grouard, meanwhile, left Pratt on Tubuai and headed from the much larger island of Tahiti. The French had established control over the island only the year before, following a protracted dispute with the British, and in the process had instituted a policy of religious freedom that made it easy for the Mormons to espouse their beliefs. Nevertheless, the LMS missionaries denounced the Mormons and tried to convince the native population to stay clear of these new arrivals from the United States. As a result, for months they converted only a few Europeans and Americans.¹¹

The mission ended in 1852 when the French government, worried about the Mormons' strange doctrines, expelled them, but the missionaries claimed to have converted an estimated 2,000 French Polynesians. The missionary effort spread through the Pacific to Hawaii in 1850, New Zealand in 1854, Samoa in 1888, and Tonga in 1891.¹² Hawaii would prove the most fertile ground, however.

George O. Cannon, a member of the first group of missionaries to Hawaii in 1850, pioneered efforts to convert the native peoples. Approximately ten missionaries set out from Honolulu to bring the gospel to the white population, the group they assumed to be the target of their efforts. To their dismay, they found very few whites on the island, most of whom dismissed their message. After a few weeks without success, the elders decided to approach the native Hawaiians. Cannon wrote, "The question arose directly, 'Shall we confine our labors to the white people?'" "For my part," Cannon explained, "I felt it to be my duty to warn all men, white and red; and no sooner did I learn the condition of the population than I made up my mind to acquire the language, preach the gospel to the natives and to the whites whenever I could obtain an opportunity, and thus fill my mission."¹³

Cannon received a revelation from God telling him to convert the native Hawaiians, which greatly augmented his resolve. The Hawaiians, according to his revelation, were descended from a branch of the people of Israel through the prophet Lehi, thus making them another group of Lamanites.¹⁴ Following this revelation, Cannon and the other Mormon missionaries began to focus their efforts on the native Hawaiians, despite the language barriers. The going proved difficult, and half of the missionaries left within the first few months. Cannon and Hiram Clark remained, however, and began to convert the native Hawaiians, seeing their first success in February 1851. By 1853 they had converted over 3,000 Hawaiians and, to escape the acrimony of competing Protestant and Catholic missionaries, they moved the church to the small island of Lanai.¹⁵

Within a decade of Cannon's revelation, church leaders began to echo the belief that Hawaiians were a remnant of the house of Israel.¹⁶ Brigham Young, in a letter to King Kamehameha the Fifth in 1865, outlined the Mormon belief in Pacific Islanders as Lamanites. Young stressed that the Mormon missionaries would obey all laws and work in conjunction with the king, and he promised that both the spiritual and cultural tutoring of the missionaries would benefit the natives by arresting "their decrease and [thus] enable them to perpetuate their race. There is no reason why they should perish and their lands become the property of the stranger." Here Young espoused a commonly held belief that primitive, tribal peoples were doomed once they came into contact with Western civilization. However, this dismal outcome need not come to pass, since God had secretly made a covenant with the Lamanites to

return to them the word of God. Revealing this hidden covenant had been the work of missionaries. Mormon-Indian relations had long been good, Young explained, because Mormons believed "that the aborigines of this Continent are of Israel." Indeed, Young claimed, "They look upon us as fathers." As for Hawaiians, he wrote, "We have not a doubt in our minds but that your Majesty and the people of your Majesty's nation . . . are a Branch of this same great family."¹⁷ If they accepted the help of the missionaries, then Hawaiians would receive not only the gospel but also vital skills for surviving in a changing world. Through this offer, Young and the missionaries hoped to enlist the king's support of their efforts.

The success of these Pacific missions had been largely serendipitous, and Mormon theology had adapted to accept the islanders as members of the church. Although early Mormonism stressed a gathering of believers in Utah, by the end of the nineteenth century this had become impractical, and nearly all Polynesian converts remained in the Pacific. As such, they existed as believers in faraway lands, while the Saints in Utah remained overwhelmingly white.

Although concerned about attracting Lamanites, Mormon missionaries also focused on winning converts of Northern European ancestry. Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde were the first Mormons to establish an overseas mission, focusing their efforts on England in 1837. The previous year Joseph Smith commanded that all parts of Israel be gathered from around the world. It would be the job of missionaries to find these hidden members of Israel, baptize them, and arrange for their transportation to Zion. Sending converts to the capital of Mormonism (first Navoo, Illinois, and later Salt Lake City) would animate missionary efforts until well into the twentieth century.

Kimball and Hyde found instant success, baptizing 1,500 people into the church. They drew heavily from textile workers in the Ribbles Valley and Lancashire. Following their success, Smith ordered a larger effort in 1839, and nine members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles journeyed to England, including Brigham Young, who had become a senior member of the quorum the previous year. Smith desired to test these men and to keep them from questioning his authority, and thus he received a revelation from God that they should be sent overseas. Under Young's direction these apostles fanned out across the British Isles. Despite opposition from local clergy, the missionaries continued to be successful. By 1841 an additional 4,000 Englishmen, Scots, and Irishmen had converted to Mormonism. Equally important,

however, Young and his followers established England as the base of operations for missions throughout Europe, as well as a collection point for converts en route to Zion. Liverpool in particular became the headquarters of what would become a very large operation.¹⁸

As Mormon missionaries spread across the globe, they took their beliefs (religious, political, and racial) with them. Like most Americans, they saw a plurality of races among both Europeans and non-Europeans. By the mid-nineteenth century, as Mormons became active in proselytizing in Europe, Germans had come to be seen as among the most desirable Mormon converts. The *Millennial Star*, the most influential Mormon missionary and emigration publication, routinely included articles about the culture and history of target groups. The paper published a short article titled “The Germans” in the March 8, 1856, issue. The author described the Germans as stern believers in patriarchy, with the father having nearly total authority over his wife and family (something the Mormons also believed in), but the article admitted that polygamy had never proliferated among them. Physically, however, the Germans epitomized manhood: “The physical form of the ancient Germans . . . was all the same. They had mild blue eyes, reddish hair, and strong muscular bodies.”¹⁹ Only in comparatively recent times had the independent and freedom-loving Germans been victimized by corrupt governments—undoubtedly making them perfect potential converts and emigrants to Utah, since these natural democrats would not long tolerate such deplorable conditions.²⁰

German-speaking converts, including those from the areas that composed the modern German nation-state, as well as Austria and Switzerland, constituted the third-largest group of Mormon converts, trailing only the English and Scandinavian nations (with the exception of Finland, which had only a few dozen converts in the nineteenth century in the face of local opposition).²¹ The LDS established a German mission in the early 1840s. Orson Hyde’s tract *Ein Ruf aus der Wüste* (A Call from the Desert), published in 1842, became the first Mormon publication in German, and John Taylor followed with a German-French version of the *Book of Mormon* in 1852. Local authorities, however, worried about the presence of these strange believers, with their odd gospel and scandalous customs. Authorities arrested missionaries in Hamburg and Berlin and threatened them with long prison sentences. Troubled by run-ins with law enforcement, the missionaries fled these large cities in the 1850s.²²

Switzerland, with its tradition of religious tolerance, proved an easier place for the missionaries to proselytize, and from the 1850s through the 1880s Switzerland sent the largest number of German-speaking converts to Utah. Nevertheless, Mormon missionaries faced harassment and intimidation from local authorities. George Mayer, in an 1854 letter to his superiors, wrote, "I went to a lawyer, and he drew up a writing against their [the Zurich police] proceedings and I handed it to the council of Zurich, and there it lies yet. They find their law cannot take hold of me, as there is religious liberty here by law, but they thought they could scare me out of Zurich."²³

Mormons eagerly proselytized wherever they could, but a border would soon be drawn between Northern and Southern Europe. This invisible border, one of culture and ethnicity, would profoundly shape Mormonism. Lorenzo Snow, an apostle of the church (and much later its president) led a mission to Italy in 1850, following orders Brigham Young had given him the previous year.²⁴ In his book on the experience, he noted that he would have preferred to stay near his family, but "as a servant of Jesus Christ, I was going to oppose 'one who exalteth himself against all that is called God,' and held an usurped authority over many nations. Italy appeared a death-wrapt land, where the errors of ages were ready to combat my attempt with gigantic powers."²⁵ The errors of ages were the allegedly corrupt practices of Catholicism.

Snow's mission began in the fall of 1849 from his home in Salt Lake City with a crossing back over the plains. With a heavy heart he left behind "the gardens and fields around our beloved city . . . for the vast wilderness which lay spread out before us for a thousand miles." The often hazardous crossing of the plains marked only the beginning of Snow's journey, but by the spring of 1850 Snow and his companion Joseph Toronto, a native Sicilian and early Mormon convert, had reached England, where Snow had previously worked as a missionary in 1842. He found many people he had baptized preaching the Mormon gospel, and the church appeared to be growing and prosperous. He likened England to a green oasis in the desert but lamented "before me is a land of strangers, whose tongues soon will sound in my ears like the jargon of Babel."²⁶ In England he met T.B.H. Stenhouse, the president of the Southampton Conference, and Jabez Woodard. Stenhouse impressed Snow with his energy and zeal, while Woodard had been studying the Bible in Italian. His language skills would prove essential to the mission. This quartet—Snow, Toronto, Stenhouse, and Woodard—formed the core of the Italian mission.²⁷

Upon arriving in Genoa in June 1850, Snow sent Toronto and Stenhouse to Torre Pellice, the largest community of the Waldenses in the Italian Alps, to ascertain the level of interest in Mormonism there. The daunting task of converting Italians soon became apparent, and Snow felt dejected at the limited prospects for new church members in Italy. In a letter to Franklin D. Richards—the highest-ranking leader of the church in Europe and the man who organized the transportation of Mormon converts from Europe to Utah—Snow complained, “I am alone and a stranger in this vast city [Genoa], eight thousand miles from my beloved family, surrounded by a people [with] whose manners and peculiarities I am unacquainted. I am come to enlighten their minds, and instruct them in principles of righteousness; but I see no possible means of accomplishing this object. All is darkness in the prospect.” Snow soon grew disenchanted with Genoa. He did attempt to convert a religious Englishman he met in his travels, but the man’s interest evaporated as soon as he discovered Smith’s membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.²⁸ It is also telling that this was the only real attempt he made to convert anyone, or at least the only one he thought worthy of mentioning to Richards. Italian apathy toward his message and his lack of language skills undermined his efforts, and he shuddered to think what stern judgment would soon befall these wayward souls. In despair and disappointment he asked God, “Hast thou not some chosen ones among this people to whom I have been sent? Lead me unto such, and Thy name shall have the glory through Jesus Thy Son.”²⁹

The situation soon improved, however, as Snow learned that Stenhouse and Toronto were having more success in the city-states of northern Italy (Italy would not become a unified nation until the early 1870s).³⁰ Snow soon decided to make this the focus of his missionary efforts. He wrote:

I have felt an intense desire to know the state of that province to which I had given them an appointment, as I felt assured it would be the field of my mission. Now, with a heart full of gratitude, I find that an opening is presented in the valleys of the Piedmont, when all others parts of Italy are closed against our efforts. I believe that the Lord has there hidden up a people amid the Alpine mountains, and it is [with] the voice of the Spirit that I shall commence something of importance in that part of this dark nation.³¹

In a letter to Brigham Young, Snow explained the decision to head to the Piedmont: "As I contemplated the condition of Italy, with deep solicitude to know the mind of the Spirit as to where I should commence my labours, I found that all was dark in Sicily, and hostile laws would exclude our efforts. No opening appeared in the cities of Italy: but the history of the Waldenses attracted my attention."³² For centuries, the people of the Waldenses had struggled against the authority of the Catholic Church, often targets of religious persecution from 1198 onward. This tradition of resistance, Snow hoped, would make them amenable to hear the Mormon gospel. Brimming with optimism he explained to Young, "I was soon convinced that this people were worthy to receive the first proclamation of the Gospel in Italy."³³

Snow felt at home among the Waldenses and in the mountains. He declared that the health of his small band of missionaries improved in the mountains, especially that of Toronto, and they felt welcomed by the poor people of the region. Indeed, he described their existence as one of extreme labor and poverty as they tried to eke out a living from the mountainous soil and short growing seasons—but unlike Catholic Italians, whose poverty made them largely undesirable converts, the Waldenses struggled with poverty because of the difficult environment and not from lack of effort. Hard work, an attribute that typified whiteness, made these Alpine peoples truly desirable converts. He saw in them kindred spirits. Like the Mormons, the Waldenses had been victims of religious bigotry and persecution, and also like the Mormons, they had retreated to the refuge of mountains, as far away from their persecutors as possible. There were also theological similarities, for both groups had doctrines that stressed a return to primitive Christianity, emphasized a willingness to revolt against established beliefs, and believed Catholicism was a false religion.³⁴

He informed Young, "I felt assured that the Lord had directed us to a branch of the House of Israel; and I was rejoiced to behold many countenances that reminded me of those with whom I had been associated in the valleys of the West."³⁵ His choice of words is important here. By countenances, he could simply be referring to a feeling of camaraderie that reminded him of home, or he could mean that they literally looked like people he knew back home in terms of their physical and ethnic appearance. More than likely, he meant both. Clearly, these hardscrabble mountain people made worthy converts, and Snow and his fellow missionaries set out to make friends with as many

people as possible. At first, they limited discussion of their religious views. Snow also had a small book on the life of Joseph Smith called the *Voice of Joseph* published in French (a language understood by many in the region, given the close proximity of France).

The mission seemed to be going well, and Snow claimed the miraculous healing of their innkeeper's three-year-old son was proof of their religious powers. Indeed, the boy's family would eventually convert. By the fall of 1850 Snow, Toronto, Stenhouse, and Woodard formally established the LDS church in Italy on the summit of a mountain they renamed Mount Brigham. They christened a prominent spire connecting to the summit "the Rock of Prophecy" because Snow predicted great things for the mission.³⁶

This optimism found its way into the *Millennial Star*. An editorial in the March 15, 1851, edition praised the successes of the "French, Italian and Danish missions [for] . . . moving forward with a degree of prosperity which is truly cheering." The article singled out Snow's efforts for special praise: "This [Italian] mission has been attended with much care and solicitude; many have felt that labors bestowed in that country would prove futile and unavailing, that doctrines of present revelation would not be able to obtain credence with that people" given the long history of Catholicism. The editorial continued, noting that the publication of the *Book of Mormon* in "the Danish, Italian, French, and German languages" would help the people learn the gospel "in their own tongues in which they were born."³⁷

The Mormons presented their religious beliefs at various meetings in the region. Following one three-hour meeting in October 1850, "One man, at least, retired with the conviction that we were the servants of the Lord." In his letter to Young, Snow continued, "On the 27th of October, this person presented himself as a candidate for baptism." This man, Jean Bose, was their first convert.³⁸

Bose, however, would prove to be one of the few successful converts, for the road before them soon became more difficult. Snow complained that local authorities barely tolerated their presence, but ultimately the greatest impediments, Snow claimed, were the people themselves. He complained to Young, "We have to preach, on the one hand, to a people nominally Protestants; but who have been, from time immemorial, in a church where any organized dissent has been unknown. The people regard any innovation as an attempt to drag them from the banner of their martyred ancestry." Indeed, the very reasons the missionaries had targeted these mountain people now worked

against them: having fought so hard to carve out a place for their beliefs, they proved unwilling to give them up so easily. "On the other hand," Snow continued, "we have the Catholics, with their proud pretensions to a priesthood of apostolic origin." Despite concerted effort on the part of Snow and the other missionaries, he concluded that the Waldenses remained backward and largely irredeemable. He ended his letter to Young on a pessimistic note: "Popery, ignorance, and superstition form a three-fold barrier to our attempts. Strange customs, laws, and languages surround us on every side. In a word, we feel that we are in Italy—the polluted fountain which has overspread the earth with her defiling waters."³⁹

Soon after he wrote his pessimistic letter to Young, Snow left for England to supervise the translation of the *Book of Mormon* into Italian. In his absence, Woodard continued the work until he was replaced by Samuel Francis in October 1854. Filled with trepidation, Francis nevertheless prepared to embark on his mission to Italy. He wrote in his journal on October 5, "[My] mission to Italy, without a knowledge of the French or Italian languages, weighed upon my mind and caused much reflection. I had heard many deplorable tales of Italy. A land covered in corruption, whose unholy fountains had corrupted nearly the whole earth." Tormented and filled with doubt, he slept little that night. Francis realized that these doubts were the work of Satan, and he "knew the mission was not man's and knowing that God had sent me I felt his omnipotence would support me as well as preserve me."⁴⁰

Arriving in Turin, the large city at the foot of the Alps, Francis made contact with Elder John Jacques Ruban, a Mormon convert who had been proselytizing in Italy. Though neither could speak the other's language, there was an instant kinship. Ruban led Francis up to the mountains where they stayed with John D. Malan and family. The Malan family had converted shortly after Snow's departure and would prove to be devout followers.⁴¹ Francis worked tirelessly at learning French and within a few months was able to converse a little bit.

Like Snow and Woodard before him, Francis found the going difficult. Local authorities proved hostile to the Mormons, often deriding them for their beliefs. In a debate with a local schoolmaster, Francis noted that the man "manifested great ignorance and soon left the house with a bad spirit." Also, it soon became apparent that Brother Ruban's interest was focused not on the gospel but rather on Malan's teenage daughters. Although he eventually

repented for his lascivious behavior, a year later Francis caught him literally with his pants down in the company of one of the girls. Shortly thereafter, Rubans fled to Geneva.⁴²

The effort teetered on the verge of collapse, prompting President Franklin D. Richards to visit with the missionaries in September 1855. Richards came to both encourage them in their efforts and exhort them to work harder. The missionaries ascended Mount Brigham and the nearby “Rock of Prophecy,” and there Richards began to prophesize on the fate of the enterprise. Daniel Tyler, one of the missionaries, recorded Richards as chiding, “No man not even Brigham [Young] can preach the gospel without faith and confidence in God as the ancient apostles and prophets did, if he be supported with means from other sources; but on the other hand, if he goes between God and the people the Lord will open his way before him and bless his labors.” He instructed Samuel Francis to redouble his effort and “predicted that if Brother Francis [would] go to Turin his way shall be opened to do a good work in the name of the Lord and gather out the Israel of God from that city.” Elder Francis thanked Richards and promised to focus on the large city of Turin. Richards ended by declaring that the truth of Mormonism would ultimately prevail, and “many would be gathered out” of Italy.⁴³

Richards’s exhortations proved cold comfort for Francis, who found it almost impossible to proselytize in the city. Local authorities refused to let the Mormons preach in public, and Turin’s Protestant congregations ignored them. By 1857, Francis had grown despondent, and on a spectacular July evening, as crowds strolled through the city, he could only see tragedy for the people of Turin:

All was life and gaiety[;] bands were playing, the people dancing, the Café’s were crammed also the Theatres; Il Geordion . . . and other promenades were thronged. Every one was apparently happy. None among all the people were thinking of Eternity, their only object was to make the present sweet. Oh!, how my soul wept in looking upon that people. I was unhappy, yes, I could have sat down and cried for them. The spirit of my mission was upon me and I felt the burden of their sins. I wished I had the liberty to preach in the streets. I wished I could declare the Gospel to them in their own language, but I was bound on every side, and I returned to my room sick of the scenes I had witnessed.⁴⁴

By the late 1850s their efforts had netted only 92 converts, almost all of them from the Waldenses, despite some tentative efforts to recruit in other areas. Between 1850 and 1860, 170 people from Italy converted to Mormonism. Seventy-three would eventually immigrate to Utah, while an equal number would be excommunicated for a variety of reasons. By 1867 only 6 converts remained in Italy. The mission had, in short, been a failure.⁴⁵ Language and religious barriers proved difficult to surmount, and even among the supposedly Protestant Waldenses, the message found few listeners. The failure had little to do with ethnic considerations and everything to do with culture, but this cultural line was also an ethnic line. Early Mormonism would not extend in Europe beyond the line of Protestantism. The European Saints would remain of Northern European stock.

Brigham Young voiced his disappointment with the results of the Italian mission in a December 3, 1854, address to the tabernacle. Young argued that the focus of the conversion effort should instead be on the Lamanites and other people who had not heard the Gospel of Jesus. He declared, "If you can find an Island upon which a portion of the people who were scattered from the Tower of Babel found a resting place, and whose inhabitants were never visited by any of the ancient Apostles and Prophets, and where Jesus Christ did not visit, and who have not received any knowledge of the Father, nor the Son, from the days of the confusion, there is the spot the Elders will reap the fruits of their labor more than anywhere else."⁴⁶

Missionaries, he asserted, would have better results among these people than among people who had heard the Gospel and rejected it, namely, Christians and Jews. Indeed, Young claimed, these groups would be among the last people to convert to Mormonism. For elders futilely working among these peoples Young asserted, "LEAVE THEM AND COME HOME, THE LORD DOES NOT REQUIRE YOU TO STAY THERE, FOR THEY MUST SUFFER AND BE DAMNED."⁴⁷ This statement, in many ways both contradictory and stunning, ignored the successful conversion efforts occurring in many parts of Europe. Perhaps Young had been influenced by the rather negative report on the Italian mission by Jabez Woodard, for a few passages earlier he noted that the peoples of the Waldenses, often held up as ideal Protestants by other groups, had shown little interest in Mormon gospel. Young attributed this failure to these peoples' ignorance and superstition and to the fact that they were "a mixed race, and are the descendants of those who heard, and most of whom rejected

the Gospel.” Like Catholics, they had been misled and victimized by corrupt church leaders. Less intelligent and inquisitive than the ethnic groups of Northern Europe, the Waldenses and other Southern Europeans would dwell in darkness and ignorance. “Do you think,” he asked, “they as a people will receive the Gospel? No. A few of them will.”⁴⁸ Young here gave vent to his own frustrations, but those frustrations took on an ethnic cast, reinforcing beliefs that he and most other Mormons certainly already held about the desirability of potential converts. Their hard work, Francis had believed, made them appear to be ideal white converts, but following the failure of the mission, Young accused them of being a mixed race and therefore not worthy converts in the first place.

Mormons’ racial and ethnic views also surfaced in the letters of a group of Mormon tourists to Europe and the Holy Land. The tourists—Lorenzo Snow, his sister Eliza, George A. Smith, and Paul A. Schettler—wrote letters to friends like Brigham Young and for publication in Mormon newspapers and periodicals. These letters discussed various aspects of the exotic and distant locations that few, if any, Mormons had ever seen. In general, the tourists found Northern Europeans to be superior, while finding Southern Europeans downtrodden, ignorant, and saddled with superstitions and an inferior religion. They also saw little of worth in the peoples of the Holy Land. Like most tourists, these intrepid Mormon travelers invariably judged the peoples with whom they came in contact by their own standards and values.

Despite the failure of the Italian mission, Brigham Young still sought opportunities for conversion among peoples in both Southern Europe and the Holy Land. In a letter (written with Daniel Wells) to George A. Smith, Young wrote, “We desire that you observe closely what openings now exist, or where they may be effected, for the introduction of the Gospel into the various countries you shall visit.” They continued, “We pray that you . . . may be abundantly blessed with words of wisdom and free utterance in all your conversations pertaining to the Holy Gospel, dispelling prejudice, and sowing seeds of righteousness among the people.”⁴⁹ Young would be disappointed once again in the reports sent back by the Palestine tourists.

Northern Europeans, of course, possessed many desirable qualities, and the tourists discussed them in their correspondence. Eliza Snow, in a letter to *Woman’s Exponent* magazine, praised the hard work, thrift, and cleanliness of the Dutch:

Cleanliness seems to be a characteristic with hotels in Holland; and, admitting industry to be promotive of neatness, it must also be a national characteristic. No sensible, candid person can visit this country without according to the people the credit of industry, and indomitable perseverance. Most people think they do well to cultivate the ground after it is made, but the Hollanders make much of the ground they cultivate, and when made and cultivated, it requires constant labor and expense to protect it from inundation. They must, as a matter of course, be honest, they have not time to be otherwise.⁵⁰

Conflating cleanliness with hard work, thrift, and honesty said much about the personal views of Snow and her fellow travelers. Snow mentioned cleanliness in another letter, but there it appeared rather as a strange contradiction to the rest of her surroundings in the Levant. Again to *Woman's Exponent* she wrote, "Considering the outside appearance of the den-like houses of the Arab Mahommedans [Muslims], it is very surprising to see how neat they look. Many, both men and women, dress in white, and *really* white; their religion enjoins cleanliness."⁵¹ Muslims, though a clearly degraded and degenerate lot, practiced cleanliness, which Snow considered a desirable trait, but in this case it did not signify any other positive attributes as it did among the Dutch. Cleanliness stood out as a by-product of their peculiar religious beliefs and even as a contradiction to their other practices. This ambivalence characterized the tour through the Holy Land.

As the only woman among the Mormon tourists, Eliza Snow, not surprisingly, paid closer attention to the status of women in the various nations they visited than did her male counterparts. "The Grecian women," she claimed, "are, many of them at least, 'beasts of burden.' I never saw such gigantic bundles carried by human beings as the poor women carry on their heads."⁵² Lorenzo Snow noticed the state of women in Italy as well, writing in a letter to the *Salt Lake Herald*, "We saw here, and in many other parts of Italy, the women engaged in this laborious employment—in one instance we noticed a company of women repairing a break in the railroad, by carrying gravel upon their heads in baskets."⁵³ For the Snows, the treatment of women reflected the state of degeneracy of the various cultures they visited, and their observations, though reflective of their culture, were somewhat ironic given that the status of Mormon women under polygamy had long been a weapon Mormonism's critics had wielded against them.

Italy, Greece, and the Holy Land—the founts of Western civilization—appeared to the quartet of travelers as backward and degenerate, largely because of their religious traditions. George A. Smith, writing to Brigham Young, noted, “Twenty-five hundred years ago these islands [of Greece] contained ‘the most learned and highly advanced nation of antiquity’; but now their appearance does not justify the rule of progress, only in the backward way. The Greek church has been the religion here for 1,400 years.”⁵⁴ Similarly, Eliza Snow observed the New Year’s Day mass in Milan in 1873. She found herself both amazed at the beauty of the cathedral and appalled at the pomp and trappings of the Catholic Church. She described the members of the congregation as idolaters, bowing and supplicating themselves before the golden crucifix and the archbishop. The sight moved her to lament, “How long, O Lord, shall these, thy children, be bound in the dwarfing chains of traditional superstition and ignorance? It is true the powers of earth are shaking, but at present I can see no hope for millions of people under the training of the ‘Mother of Harlots’ [Catholic Church], and the influence of priestcraft.”⁵⁵

The Holy Land had also seen a marked decline in the quality of its civilization. A group of Bedouins encamped near the Palestine tourists, regaling them with songs and dancing in exchange for money. Lorenzo Snow wrote, “Recollecting several robberies and murders which had occurred in the vicinity, we paid them for this wretched entertainment, constantly adding more, until we excited their admiration.” What an odd contradiction, he felt, between the biblical history of the Holy Land and its current state. Snow continued, “We retired to our tents, reflecting on the strange difference between the present occupants of this locality and those who inhabited it when prophets converted bitter springs into sweet fountains, and smote impetuous streams, piling up their waters on either side and walked through on dry ground.”⁵⁶ The prophets and holy men had long ago vanished, Snow felt, and murderers and thieves now occupied the land.

Eliza Snow, like many educated Victorian Americans, fancied herself something of a poet and penned a delightfully awful poem on the state of Jerusalem. The poem began by celebrating Jerusalem’s past:

Thou City with a cherished name,
A name in garlands drest
Adorned with ancient sacred fame,

As city of the blest.
 Thy rulers once, were mighty men,
 Thy sons renowned in war:
 Thy smiles were sought and courted then
 By people from Afar.

Then came the fall:

Degraded, and on every hand,
 From wisdom all estranged;
 Thy glory has departed, and
 All, but thy name is changed!
 From God withdrawn—by Him forsook—
 To all intents depraved;
 Beneath the Turkish iron yoke,
 Thou long hast been enslaved.

The poem, however, ends on something of a hopeful note:

Thy children—seed of Israel,
 Of God's 'peculiar care'
 On whom the weight of judgment fell,
 Are scattered everywhere."
 And the final stanza: "Thy sun has not forever set—
 God has a great design,
 and will fulfill His purpose yet,
 concerning Palestine."⁵⁷

Snow's poem illustrated the way these Mormon tourists viewed the world around them. Their denunciation of Catholics, Greek Orthodox believers, and Muslims fit with the narrative of the Mormons as the new chosen people of God. Indeed, Snow says as much when she writes that the people of Israel "are scattered everywhere," because Mormon doctrine held that the blood of ancient Israel had been scattered throughout the nations of the earth and that God intended Mormonism to once again bring these chosen people together. Thus the optimistic conclusion comes from the belief that God is working through the Mormons to redeem humanity. The reality of conversion, however, stood in marked contrast to her lyrical rhapsodizing.

The only real attempt the Palestine tourists made to spread their religion occurred on a steamship crossing between the Greek island of Corfu and Alexandria, Egypt. George A. Smith, in a February 8, 1873, letter to Brigham Young, described the steamship passengers as including many Americans and Englishmen: "They were much surprised to find live specimens from 'Mormondom'; and, as they would keep talking to us, we preached to them nearly the whole voyage. They were a class of people that would not go to our meetings, but by this means heard something of the gospel."⁵⁸ Smith doubted that any of them took the message seriously but hoped that perhaps some good had been done. Their efforts resembled those of Lorenzo Snow when he first entered Italy two decades earlier in that the only people they attempted to convert already spoke English. To be fair, the Palestine tourists spent their time sightseeing and trying to establish a personal connection to the land of Jesus and the prophets rather than attempting to win converts among the peoples they encountered. Nevertheless, they clearly saw no reason even to try, since the peoples of the Holy Land seemed of such poor character.

Language barriers, race, and culture circumscribed Mormon conversion efforts (with the marked and important exception of the Pacific Islanders). Thus converts were largely composed of Northern European whites, ethnic groups like the English, Welsh, Scandinavians, and Germans, or, in short, the most desirable potential immigrants in the eyes of most Americans. This should have been a cause for celebration, but their religious views made them suspect.

Nineteenth-century critics of Mormonism—and there were many—often pointed out how supposedly degenerate the European converts seemed when compared with non-Mormon immigrants from the same countries. Poor, stupid, and easily manipulated, these converts seemed anything but desirable, critics contended. Mormon belief, in short, had stripped these desirable immigrants of their whiteness.

Hard work had long been considered a chief attribute of a successful American and of a desirable immigrant. While Americans praised the work Mormons had done in transforming the Utah desert into productive farmland, they denounced them as apostates and polygamists and condemned their society as immoral. Mark Twain, in his classic travelogue *Roughing It*, described Salt Lake City as an orderly "city of fifteen thousand inhabitants

with no loafers perceptible in it; and no visible drunkards or noisy people.” He continued, “And everywhere were workshops, factories, and all manner of industries; and intent faces and busy hands were to be seen wherever one looked; in one’s ears was the ceaseless clink of hammers, the buzz of trade and the contented hum of drums and flywheels.”⁵⁹ This was the sound of productivity, of hard work, a sound familiar to most Americans. Twain noted that his home state of Missouri featured a crest with two bears holding a cask between them, apparently in the act of imbibing an alcoholic beverage (or at least that was Twain’s interpretation), but in contrast the Mormon crest “was simple, unostentations [*sic*], and fitted like a glove. It was a representation of a Golden Beehive with the bees all at work!”⁶⁰ In Twain’s typical deadpan style, he made several shrewd observations about both Americans and the Mormons of Utah. The Mormons were abstemious, hardworking, and communal—all traits held in great regard in American society (unlike drunken Missourians and their ursine stand-ins) and that should have brought praise to the Mormons. Yet others, while acknowledging the Mormons’ hardworking character, nevertheless found much to criticize.

James Rusling, in a comment typically praising the thrift of Mormons, wrote of first meeting Mormon settlements in the Weber Valley: “Fine little farms dotted the valley everywhere, and the settlements indeed were so numerous, that much of the valley resembled rather a scattered village. The little Weber River passes down the valley, on its way to Great Salt Lake, and its waters had everywhere been diverted, and made to irrigate nearly every possible acre of ground. Fine crops of barley, oats, wheat, potatoes, etc., appeared to have been gathered, and cattle and sheep were grazing on all sides.” As for the people, Rusling observed that they “looked like a hardy, industrious, thrifty race, well fitted to their stern struggle with the wilderness. Everybody was apparently well-fed and well-clad, though the women had a worn and tired look, as if they led a dull life and lacked sympathy.”⁶¹ He found Salt Lake City even more impressive than the Weber Valley: “Without doubt, it must be said of the people of Utah, that they are an industrious, frugal, and thrifty race. By their wonderful system of irrigation, they have converted the desert there into a garden, and literally made the wilderness, ‘bloom and blossom as the rose.’”⁶²

Yet Rusling, like many others, attacked Mormonism as an abomination that aided the powerful and preyed on the powerless. Women, subject to

the practice of polygamy, appeared tired and no doubt suffered under its inhumane sway. Mormon leaders also preyed on the new arrivals. Rusling asserted that the foreign-born Mormon converts came from among the “very lowest and poorest classes” and ended up in a quasi-feudal relationship with American Mormon leaders. Rusling accused the Latter-day Saints of being less a religion than a highly effective immigration scheme: “Indeed, to sum it up in one word, the whole institution of Mormonism—polygamy and all—apart from its theological aspects, impresses you rather as a gigantic organization for collecting and consolidating a population, and thus settling up a Territory rapidly, whatever else it may be; and its success, in this respect, has certainly been notable and great.”⁶³

The Mormon practice of polygamy, however, would lead the Latter-day Saints into racial degeneration, he believed. Rusling discussed the situation with a federal judge and opponent of the Mormon leadership in Utah. The judge confided that the city cemetery was a “perfect Golgotha of infant graves.” The children of the Mormons’ polygamous marriages were “inferior, of course, in many ways . . . as the fruits of such a practice always are, and must be.” Rusling, playing something of the devil’s advocate, countered that the children he had seen appeared spry and healthy. The judge responded, “No doubt. It is a good climate, and there has not been time enough yet.” A few generations of wretched polygamy, however, would leave the children “feeble and tainted . . . in constitution” and erase the benefits of Utah’s beneficent climate. If degeneration did not result from polygamy, the judge argued, then “all History is false, and Science a slander.”⁶⁴ Mormon Utah, Rusling and his wisely anonymous judge asserted, provided an example of white racial degeneration in the West, degeneration that resulted not from climate but rather from the supposedly debauched practices of the Latter-day Saints.

Rusling’s condemnation of the Mormons appeared nearly measured compared with that of John Hanson Beadle. A gentile (as Mormons called non-Mormons) newspaperman in Utah for a time, he became a vocal opponent of Mormonism. Beadle wrote *The Undeveloped West*, a fairly typical travelogue designed to encourage settlement, in the 1870s. He declared the Scandinavian immigrants he encountered in Iowa and Minnesota as “among the wealthiest people in the country; their national industry has raised them from poverty to opulence.” In contrast, he wrote, “I saw people of the same races in Utah, by the most exhaustive labor a *little* better off than they had

been at home, and heard them boasting what great things 'the Lord and Brother Brigham had done for them.' These in Iowa had no Prophet, and consequently made a good selection for their homes, and prospered without being tithed."⁶⁵ Discounting the environmental suitability of arid Utah and the territory's still-developing society as causes, Beadle instead attributed the material difference between the two groups to religious belief. Without the suffocating authority of the Mormon church, the immigrants in Iowa and Minnesota prospered while those in Utah suffered under the yoke of Mormon domination. The former embraced the values of independence, hard work, and self-reliance, making them truly desirable white yeoman farmers; but the latter, despite their hard work, had exchanged their freedom and self-reliance for obedience and a false religion and thus could not truly be said to have the privileges of whiteness.

Upon meeting the Mormons later, Beadle again noted that their immigrants were of a decidedly poor quality. In the smaller settlements away from Salt Lake and the railroad, he declared, the traveler would "find a degree of poverty and ignorance he would scarcely have credited among the peasantry of Europe. And there he will find the simon-pure, straight-out and fanatical Mormons—a race of simple shepherds, with reason scarce above the sheep they drive. There the unhappy traveler, if compelled to seek shelter in winter, will find it in a Swedish 'dug out' or a half-mud hut, tenanted equally by dogs, Danes, fleas, and other undesirables."⁶⁶ Beadle declared that gentiles could not compete on equal footing in Utah because Mormon immigrants could live with a state of poverty Americans would not tolerate: "No American could go into the country and compete with the foreign-born Mormons, who worked little five[-] and ten-acre patches, and thought themselves in affluence if they had a hundred dollars' worth of surplus produce."⁶⁷ Filled with ignorant, poverty-stricken fanatics, the Utah Territory offered little opportunity for other Americans. Though composed of thrifty, hardworking Anglo-Americans and Northern European immigrants, Beadle nevertheless labeled the Mormons an undesirable group. His comments, curiously, echoed the rhetoric of the opponents of Chinese immigration, and by using the language of race, he effectively marginalized the Mormons as a lesser and inferior "race of simple shepherds" whose presence as "undesirables" made them incompatible with the larger nation. By sinking to the level of the poorest and most ignorant immigrants, these servile Mormons had exchanged their whiteness for a false religion.

The US government agreed with the poor condition of Mormon converts and sought ways to limit this immigration. In 1879 the US chargé d'affaires, M. J. Hoppin, asked the British government to help restrain Mormon immigration. Mormonism, he explained, preyed on "the ignorant classes who are easily influenced by the double appeal to their passions and their poverty held out in the flattering picture of a home in the fertile and prosperous regions where Mormonism has established its material seal." These converts, however, existed to feed the Mormons' need for plural wives, and "these so called 'marriages' are pronounced by the Laws of the United States to be crimes against the statutes of the country and punishable as such." Hoppin, however, noted that "the bands and organizations to which are got together in foreign lands as recruits cannot be regarded as otherwise than a deliberate and systematic attempt to bring persons to the United States with the intent of violating their Laws and Committing Crimes expressly punishable under the Statutes." He hoped the British government would do everything within its legal authority to "check the organization of these Criminal enterprises by agents who are thus operating beyond the reach of the Law of the United States and to prevent the departure of those proposing to go thither."⁶⁸ In short, he wanted a government crackdown on Mormon immigration efforts.

Hoppin's request made its way through the channels of the British government, finally reaching the office of police magistrate J. Vaughn. Vaughn, while sympathetic to the American desire to prevent Mormon immigration and the spread of polygamy, asserted, "This Government is powerless to prevent the private adoption of those doctrines, or, to restrain the believers in them from quitting Great Britain and emigrating to any other country."⁶⁹

The official response from Britain's secretary of state for foreign affairs, the Marquis of Salisbury, echoed Vaughn's opinion that, regretfully, the British government could do nothing to stop the emigration of Mormon converts to the United States, but his office did promise to print "a notice to be inserted into the newspapers cautioning persons against being deceived by Mormonite Emmissaries and making generally known the Law of the United States affecting polygamy and the penalties attaching to infringement thereof which he hopes will have the desired effect."⁷⁰

Mormon immigration remained a concern for the US government, but, curiously, American law could do little to prevent Mormon immigrants from coming into the country—after all, they were considered white and

they hailed from highly desirable nations. Nevertheless, there remained a bias against the Mormons. The historian Douglas Dexter Alder observes, for example, that an 1891 revision of the exclusion list added "persons suffering from loathsome and contagious diseases, persons convicted of moral turpitude, polygamists, [and] aliens assisted by others" as among those undesirable elements that should be refused admission to the United States. Alder writes that this is an odd inclusion, since in 1890 the church officially outlawed polygamy as a condition of statehood. He asserts that the government had earlier prevented those who professed a belief in polygamy (essentially all Mormons) from voting, serving jury duty, or holding public office; and such a policy could have easily been implemented to prevent Mormon immigration, but the US government never did so.⁷¹

US immigration law, however, did draw distinctions among racial and ethnic groups, first with the Chinese and then with virtually all groups after the implementation of the 1924 Immigration Act. This law had little effect on Mormon immigration, though, since nearly all converts came from Northern European nations that were not subject to quota restrictions. Further, Alder observes, "The church might have been vitally concerned with this law if it were not already in the middle of a policy change which resulted in discouraging immigration." This policy change marginalized the importance of all converts moving to Utah to build the new Zion and instead commanded them to spread the gospel in their native communities. In this way, Mormon leaders felt, these converts could do more good by staying in their home countries. The language barrier, which had long frustrated missionary enterprises, would no longer be a problem. According to Alder, "The 1924 law actually came as a welcome guest to Mormon officials and the mission presidents quickly adopted as one of their arguments for remaining in Europe the increased difficulty of gaining entrance into the United States."⁷² Indeed, by 1924 Mormonism had grown and changed. While far from mainstream, the faith had matured to the point where it boasted of believers scattered around the globe. Too many converts would overwhelm Utah, which could not support them economically, and the cost of transportation, especially since most converts lacked the financial resources necessary to undertake the journey, proved prohibitive.

Race and culture, as much as religion, shaped the Mormons and their new Zion. Despite the best, sincere efforts of missionaries, Mormon converts were mostly found among Protestant Northern Europeans. The Saints

would remain white for some time to come.⁷³ Non-Mormon Americans, however, often used the rhetoric of racial desirability to attack the Mormons as somehow less than white. Their religious practices allegedly led believers into a state of racial decline, not unlike other undesirable groups, and no peoples who gave up freedom for subservience could truly be white. For decades to come, the Mormons would continue to be seen as an anomaly, an other, and they would work hard to demonstrate their patriotism, loyalty, and status as equal, white citizens.

NOTES

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3. *Ibid.*
4. Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:801–5, 3:981–85.
5. Joseph Smith, *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), ii.
6. Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 10.
7. Elise Boxer, “‘To Become White and Delightful’: American Indians and Mormon Identity,” PhD dissertation, Arizona State University, Tempe, 2009; Thomas W. Murphy, “Imagining Lamanites: Native Americans and the Book of Mormon,” PhD dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle, 2003.
8. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 11. Mauss recounts the contradictory and complicated history of Mormon-Indian relations in chapters 3, 4, and 5, pp. 41–156.
9. R. Lanier Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 3.
10. *Ibid.*, 5–6.
11. *Ibid.*, 7–9.
12. “The Church in Oceania,” in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1022–26. See also Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*.
13. Quoted in Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 97.
14. *Ibid.*, 97–99.
15. *Ibid.*, 111–15.
16. *Ibid.*, xiv.

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21. On the Mormon experience in Finland, see Kim B. Östman, "Mormons, Civil Authorities and Lutheran Clergy in Finland, 1875–1889," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 35, no. 3 (September 2010): 268–89.
22. Douglas Dexter Alder, "German Speaking Immigration to Utah, 1850–1950," MA thesis, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 1959, vi, 5–9.
23. Quoted in *ibid.*, 10.
24. Michael Homer, "The Italian Mission, 1850–1867," *Sunstone* 7, no. 3 (May–June 1982): 16–21.
25. Lorenzo Snow, *The Italian Mission* (London: W. Aubrey, 1851), 3.
26. *Ibid.*, 7.
27. Homer, "Italian Mission."
28. Snow, *Italian Mission*, 9.
29. *Ibid.*, 10.
30. Homer, "Italian Mission."
31. Snow, *Italian Mission*, 10.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, 11.
34. Homer, "Italian Mission."
35. Snow, *Italian Mission*, 11.
36. Homer, "Italian Mission." The mountain, Michael Homer believes, is most likely Monte Vandalino.
37. "Glad Tidings of Great Joy," *Millennial Star* 13, no. 6 (March 15, 1851): 88–89.
38. Snow, *Italian Mission*, 17.
39. *Ibid.*, 18.
40. Samuel Francis, *Journal Containing the Most Important Items of My Life and Ministry, 1850–57*, Mss. 3268, Folder 2, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
41. Homer, "Italian Mission."
42. Francis, *Journal Containing the Most Important Items of My Life and Ministry*, 154–55.

43. Daniel Tyler, Journals 1853–56, Daniel Tyler Papers, Mss. SC 481, Folder 2, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

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45. Homer, “Italian Mission.”

46. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 2:141, <http://www.journalofdiscourses.org/> (accessed July 12, 2012).

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48. *Ibid.*, 2:141.

49. Brigham Young and Daniel H. Wells to George A. Smith, October 15, 1872, in George A. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Paul A. Schettler, and Eliza R. Snow, *Correspondence of Palestine Tourists* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Steam Printing, 1875), 1–2.

50. Eliza Snow to editor, *Woman’s Exponent*, December 29, 1872, in *ibid.*, 100–101.

51. Eliza Snow to editor, *Woman’s Exponent*, February 14, 1873, in *ibid.*, 178; italics in original.

52. *Ibid.*, 174.

53. Lorenzo Snow to editors, *Salt Lake Herald*, January 29, 1873, in *ibid.*, 164.

54. George A. Smith to Brigham Young, February 8, 1873, in *ibid.*, 166.

55. Eliza Snow to Mrs. Jane S. Richards, January 1, 1873, in *ibid.*, 106–7.

56. Lorenzo Snow to editor, *Deseret News*, March 6, 1873, in *ibid.*, 239.

57. Eliza Snow, March 6, 1873, in *ibid.*, 242–43. She never published this poem in a newspaper, but it was included in the published book.

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63. *Ibid.*, 201–2.

64. *Ibid.*, 192.

65. J[ohn] H[anson] Beadle, *The Undeveloped West: or, Five Years in the Territories* (Philadelphia: National Publishing, 1873), 39; italics in original.

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67. *Ibid.*, 142.

68. Quoted in Julian Puncéfote to A.F.O. Liddell, September 4, 1879, in Mormon Emigration Records, 1879, Mss. 4150, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

69. J. Vaughan, Police Magistrate, to A.F.O. Liddell, September 13, 1879, in *ibid.*
70. Secretary Crop, Under Secretary of State, to M. J. Hoppin, United States Chargé d'Affaires, September 1879, in *ibid.*
71. Alder, *German Speaking Immigration to Utah*, 27.
72. *Ibid.*, 31.
73. Mormonism has been spreading rapidly in non-white countries, and now many Mormons are from non-white racial and ethnic groups. Yet the image of Mormons as whites remains powerful enough that the church specifically addresses the issue in the "Frequently Asked Questions" section of its website: <http://mormon.org/faq/#Race> (accessed December 15, 2011).