

# IMMIGRATION AND THE "MORMON QUESTION": AN INTERNATIONAL EPISODE

WILLIAM MULDER  
*University of Utah*

## I

IT IS IRONIC that Mormonism, so native to the United States that Tolstoi called it "the American religion,"<sup>1</sup> once seemed notoriously un-American. To the Christian Convention gathered in Salt Lake City in 1888 to review "the situation in Utah," it seemed, in fact, anti-American. Reverend A. S. Bailey, addressing all the denominational workers in the Territory, believed that a traveler visiting Utah would find not simply "more that is European than American," but "a spirit foreign to the spirit of Americans, . . . a system indigenous indeed, but hostile to American ideas."<sup>2</sup>

His charges were familiar: Mormonism restrained trade in forbidding the Saints to do business with the Gentiles; it controlled the People's Party, invoking a religious test for political office; it levied taxes on property in the form of tithing; it indoctrinated the schools; it mocked the American home with its oriental abomination, polygamy; it was a Kingdom bent on overthrowing the Government. "With missionaries in every State in the Union, with a strong lobby at the national capital, and with recruits being brought in by hundreds from the Old World, this plague cannot be easily quarantined."<sup>3</sup>

To Christian patriots determined to make an end of polygamy and theocratic rule in Utah, the flow of proselytes from abroad was a particular vexation. It was all too true that Mormonism, as a British reviewer observed, owed its survival and continuing growth to "persecution, martyrdom, and immigration."<sup>4</sup> Immigration fed all the other iniquities: it replenished polygamy, it strengthened the hand of the priesthood, it supplied subservient colonizers to extend the "American Turkey" and docile voters to spread its subversive influence. Reverend J. M. Coyner imagined the annual trainloads of foreign converts "scattered over the great mountain regions of the West" and shuddered to think Mormonism might eventually

<sup>1</sup> Thomas J. Yates, "Count Tolstoi and the American Religion," *The Improvement Era* (Salt Lake City), XLII (February, 1939), 92.

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Bailey, "Anti-American Influences in Utah," in *The Situation in Utah: Proceedings of the Christian Convention 1888* (Salt Lake City: Parsons, Kendall & Co., 1888), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Dicey, "Religion in America," *Macmillan's Magazine*, XV (1867), 443. Dicey was reviewing William Hepworth Dixon's book, *New America* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1867).

command sixteen Western senators and a corresponding proportion of congressmen.<sup>5</sup> "It is clear," said *Harper's Magazine* in 1881, "that the Mormon Kingdom in Utah is composed of foreigners and the children of foreigners. . . . It is an institution so absolutely un-American in all its requirements that it would die of its own infamies within twenty years, except for the yearly infusion of fresh serf blood from abroad."<sup>6</sup>

Immigration, elsewhere considered so characteristically American, perversely stamped Utah as alien and seditious and kept it a vassal territory for nearly half a century. When the slanders of recreant federal officials induced President Buchanan in 1857 to send troops to Utah to depose Brigham Young, Stephen A. Douglas, who had once befriended the Mormons, applauded the action: "Nine-tenths of the inhabitants are aliens by birth who have refused to become naturalized, or to take the oath of allegiance." Should Johnston's Army fail to bring them to "a sense of duty," he was ready to repeal the organic law of the Territory on the ground they were "alien enemies."<sup>7</sup> "Buchanan's Blunder" proved there was no Utah rebellion, but the "Mormon Question" persisted. In 1860 the first Pony Express brought rumors that a bill was being considered to remove the capital to Carson Valley and change the name of the Territory to Nevada,<sup>8</sup> a bid to shift control into Gentile hands that never material-

<sup>5</sup> John M. Coyner, "Letters on Mormonism," in J. M. Coyner, ed., *Handbook on Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Hand-Book Publishing Co., 1882), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> C. C. Goodwin, "The Mormon Situation," *Harper's Magazine*, LXIII (October, 1881), 763.

<sup>7</sup> *Remarks of the Honorable Stephen A. Douglas on Kansas, Utah, and the Dred Scott Decision, Delivered at Springfield, Illinois, June 12, 1857* (Chicago, 1857). The *Deseret News* of August 12, 1857, denied Douglas' charge and found it "surely rather curious that a Senator in this boasted asylum for the oppressed from every clime should object to foreigners' settling upon fertile acres which in millions upon millions are inviting the improving hand of industry, or should so soon forget the channel of his own pedigree and the noble deeds enacted upon our soil by foreigners from the days of LaFayette until now. . . ." Quoted in M. H. Cannon, "The Gathering of British Mormons to Western America: A Study in Religious Migration" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, American University, 1950), p. 157. Brigham Young severely criticized the territorial policies of the federal government, calling the Ordinance of 1787 "unconstitutional" and "a relic of colonial barbarism" because it forced unwanted officers upon a "free people" and denied them the privilege of self-government. "Governor's Message, December 15, 1857," in "Governors' Messages," typescript in Utah State Historical Society. Thirty years later the Mormons were still reaping the whirlwind from these early seeds of contention: "Utterances of prominent men in this Church at a time of great excitement have been selected and grouped to convey the impression that present members are seditious. Those expressions were made more than thirty years ago, when through the falsehoods of recreant officials, afterwards demonstrated to be baseless, troops were sent to this Territory and were viewed by the people in their isolated condition, fifteen hundred miles from railroads, as an armed mob coming to renew the bloody persecutions of years before. . . . Criticism of the acts of the United States officials was not considered then, neither is it now, as treason. . . ." *The First Presidency and Twelve Apostles, Official Declaration, December 12, 1889* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1889), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1892), I, 725.

ized, though Utah continued to lose ribs in the creation of neighboring territories which soon outran it in achieving statehood.

After the Civil War, with the anti-bigamy statute of 1862 on the books, the Mormons became one of "those great pressing themes," as Samuel Bowles put it, along with the "Pacific Railroad and the Mines," to which the country turned its official attention. Spanning the continent with Speaker Schuyler Colfax in the summer of 1865 to measure "the national breadth," the editor of the Springfield (Mass.) *Republican* concluded that "The conflict of sects and civilization, growing up there in Utah, will soon solve the polygamous problem — rightly and without bloodshed — if the Government will make itself felt in it with a wise guardianship, a tender nursing, a firm principle."<sup>9</sup> The "Government," of course, meant the Republican Party. "We mean to put that business of the Mormons through," a New Englander told a British traveler in 1866. "We have done a bigger job in the South; and we shall now fix things up in Salt Lake City."<sup>10</sup>

But it was twenty years before things were "fixed up." While the Republicans tried to redeem the other half of their pledge to crush the "twin relics of barbarism, slavery and polygamy," the Mormons resolutely went on redeeming their own pledge to gather Israel and build the Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> It was campaign promises versus divine injunction; the Lord finally yielded to Uncle Sam, but only after Congress and the courts, the press and the pulpit had been turned into a battleground. "Everybody's talking about Utah," wrote a Danish immigrant in 1880,<sup>12</sup> though not everyone was telling the same story.

Affairs were grossly exaggerated. The Hon. W. H. Hooper, Utah's delegate to Congress, found the Mormons "the most vigorously lied about of any people in the nation." They firmly believed that fifty million people were "calling loudly" for their extinction.<sup>13</sup> The extremists did in fact call

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent* (Springfield, Mass.: Samuel Bowles and Co., 1865), p. 398.

<sup>10</sup> Dixon, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

<sup>11</sup> "The Republicans long ago put into their platform that there were two twin relics that had to be moved out of the way — the one was slavery, and the other polygamy. They have removed slavery out of the way, but polygamy seems to bother them. They are in a good deal of trouble about it. . . ." John Taylor, sermon, February 10, 1884, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool and London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1885), XXV, 92.

<sup>12</sup> C. C. A. Christensen, *Digte og Afhandlingar*, John S. Hansen, ed. (Salt Lake City: Bikubens Bibliotek, 1921), p. 294.

<sup>13</sup> Speech in the House of Representatives, March 23, 1870, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Globe*, Part 7, Appendix, p. 173. A Connecticut clergyman who had something favorable to say of the Mormons reported that an editor threw up his hands: "I have no doubt that what you say is all true, but it would ruin us to publish it." The Rev. John C. Kimball, *Mormonism Exposed, the Other Side* (Boston: The Index, 1884), p. 5.

for Sherman to march through Utah as he had marched through Georgia;<sup>14</sup> they wanted to dissolve the legislature and govern Utah by commission; and they clamored for enforceable legislation that would disfranchise polygamists and prohibit Mormon immigration. The same New Englanders whose emigrant societies had wrested Kansas from the slave interests were ready to overrun Utah — until they soberly reflected that the Mormons had already pre-empted all the arable land.<sup>15</sup> The moderates had more faith in education and the changes time and the railroad would bring. Moral force might “persuade Brigham to lie down with Bowles” and get “Boston and Salt Lake City . . . to shake hands as Boston and Charleston have already done.”<sup>16</sup>

The cry went up to Christianize Utah. “If you really have the interests of Utah at heart,” one Gentile wrote his pastor in 1869, “just send here about twenty-five earnest Methodist preachers, that can sing and pray, and turn them loose; it would do more good than all the Cullom Bills Congress could pass.”<sup>17</sup> Reverend M. T. Lamb, looking for a bright spot in “all the dark canvas” of Mormonism, found immigration itself a blessing in disguise. “Through the strange providence of God there have been thrust upon the Christian workers of our country 50,000 young people in Utah, who, if they can be brought under the influences of the truth . . . are worth ten times as much . . . as they could have been had their parents remained in the

<sup>14</sup> The Liberals sang “Marching through Zion” to the tune of “Marching through Georgia”:  
Orlond’s boys with carpet bags can never take Salt Lake!  
So the royal families said, but that was their mistake,  
We’ll show them at the ballot boxes who will “take the cake,”  
While we go marching through Zion.

“Political Parties,” in *Heart Throbs of the West* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1949), X, 18, reproduces a version with five verses and a chorus.

<sup>15</sup> “The Massachusetts gentlemen who propose to overthrow the Mormon power in Utah by filling the waste places of the Territory with immigrants from the East” were personages no less than Edward Everett Hale, Amos A. Lawrence, and Eli Thayer. The *New York Times* was admiring but skeptical: “Only a phenomenally successful emigration society can keep pace with the immigration of converts, especially in view of the fact that the most attractive parts of the Territory have long been in the hands of the Mormons.” Editorial, April 20, 1885. Rev. DeWitt Talmage told a Brooklyn Tabernacle audience: “Now is the time for the United States Government to strike. Let as much of their rich lands be confiscated as will pay for their subjugation. . . . Set Phil Sheridan after them. Give him enough troops, and he will teach all Utah that forty wives is thirty-nine too many.” *New York Times*, October 28, 1877. He would have “cannon of the biggest bore thunder into them the seventh commandment.” A decade earlier the *Times* had taken issue with fire-eaters who would force Mormon loyalty and monogamy at the point of the sword: “If an imperial Zouave on the other side of the Rio Grande ‘makes faces’ at a blue uniform on this side, our hot-heads would at once raise a ‘million’ men to fight the French Emperor. . . . If the redskins of the plains have a war-dance . . . these belligerent citizens would never attempt the policy of William Penn.” Editorial, November 28, 1865.

<sup>16</sup> Dixon, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis Hartsough, quoted in *Church Review*, IV (December 29, 1895), 12.

stagnant, uneventful life of the old country." But, he had to admit, "Filled from their infancy with bitter prejudice and even hatred of the Christianity represented by the Evangelical churches, they are very hard to reach."<sup>18</sup>

As early as 1865 a Danish convert wrote home that "a few of the world's preachers" had come to Utah "under guise of winning people back to 'true Christianity.'" <sup>19</sup> In Salt Lake City's Independence Hall, completed that year and destined to become a center of Gentile activity, Reverend Norman McLeod, Congregationalist minister and chaplain at nearby Fort Douglas, preached "civilized Christianity" to "a large and intelligent congregation," taught a Sunday school of some two hundred scholars, and lectured weekly on the evils of polygamy. The "work of God" seemed established "on a firm and enduring basis."<sup>20</sup>

Though the reverend himself shortly departed to lecture in Eastern cities on the Mormon problem, scores of dedicated denominational workers after 1869 took up the great work of Utah's redemption, supported by the collections in Eastern congregations and remembered in their prayers. In the deliberations of the missionary societies and the annual conferences of the churches, benighted Utah took priority over heathen Africa. Missionary reports coming from the small towns and villages especially had an air of martyrdom, of heroic effort for small gain. "Work in an exclusive Mormon town is necessarily very slow," recalled the Presbyterian S. L. Gillespie in 1876. "Apostates from the Mormons are cut off from business and society, as well as from their Church, and so have to seek homes elsewhere; and the few Gentiles attempting to live among the Mormons rarely stay more than one year; so that all our mission work among the Mormons is 'sowing seed upon waters,' requiring great patience and perseverance."<sup>21</sup>

If in numbers the result of denominational effort in Utah was small, in influence it was much greater. The missionaries and the malcontents dramatized their needs and difficulties, provoking a national crusade. Frances Willard wrote a preface to Jennie Froiseth's *Women of Mormonism* calculated to harrow up the soul of the nation.<sup>22</sup> Eliza Young's *Wife No. 19*, detailing the hard times of Brigham Young's divorced wife, was

<sup>18</sup> M. T. Lamb, "Lessons from Mormonism," *Proceedings of the Christian Convention* 1888, p. 88.

<sup>19</sup> Christoffer J. Kempe to Carl Widerborg, November 14, 1865, *Skandinaviens Stjerne* (Copenhagen), XV (January 15, 1866), 122.

<sup>20</sup> Robert J. Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1941), pp. 30-33.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in "Scandinavian Work in Utah," *Church Review*, IV (December 29, 1895), 54. Nevertheless, by 1880 the Protestants had 22 ministers serving 24 churches, and 25 mission day schools with 54 teachers and 2,250 pupils; by 1890, the high water mark of their activity, they had 62 ministers serving 63 churches, and 64 schools with 323 teachers and 7,007 pupils. R. G. McNiece, "The Christian Conflict with Mormonism," in J. M. Coyner, ed., *Handbook on Mormonism*, p. 60; *Report of the Governor of Utah to the Secretary of the Interior, 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891), p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> An anti-polygamy work, it was published in Detroit in 1882.

hardly another *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but it drew tears from Harriet Beecher Stowe, who — daughter, wife, and mother of clergymen — felt an uncommon tenderness for the reports coming from the Christian martyrs in Utah. She gladly contributed to the Anti-Polygamy Society and its *Standard*.<sup>23</sup> The salvation of Utah was peculiarly a woman's work. "In thousands of church parlors throughout the nation . . . sober, dignified and purposeful, they sat on horse-hair sofas around tables covered with worn green baize and passed resolutions."<sup>24</sup> The President and Congress could hardly turn a deaf ear to such notable and insistent busybodies, to voices so pure and convincing. Besides, the Liberal Party in Utah, a union of anti-Mormons of whatever faith or political persuasion, had long been struggling for leadership and had maintained an effective lobby in Washington. Impatient with the slow reformation of the denominations, they looked to the law.

On a rising tide of public feeling against the Mormons, carpetbaggers and crusaders joined hands to promote one hotly debated bill after another, seeking the formula that would at last throttle polygamy and its nourisher, Mormon immigration: in 1867 the Cragin bill, which sought the abolition of jury trials in polygamy cases; in 1869 the "iniquitous" Cullom bill, which would subject Utah to complete federal control, an attempt which stirred Mormondom to its center and occasioned a mammoth protest meeting in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City to petition the Senate not to pass it; in 1874 the Poland bill, which would have jury lists drawn by the clerk of the district courts to procure non-Mormon jurors; in 1876 the Christianity bill, which would disqualify jurors who scrupled to convict polygamists; in 1882 the Edmunds Act, which at last made "cohabitation" a punishable offense, since polygamy was hard to prove, and which disqualified polygamist voters, brought United States marshals and their deputies and the days of the underground to Utah, and a Commission to regulate its elections; in 1884 the Hoar bill, which would dissolve the Perpetual Emigrating Fund; and finally in 1887 the Edmunds-Tucker Act, which dissolved the Fund, disincorporated the Mormon Church itself, disfranchised the women, and led to the capitulation of the church in the official Manifesto in 1890 abandoning polygamy. The addition of polygamists to the excluded classes in the federal immigration law in 1891 came as anti-climax.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *The Anti-Polygamy Standard*, a monthly magazine, flourished for three years, from April, 1880, to April, 1883. The Salt Lake City Public Library has a file of this curious publication.

<sup>24</sup> Dwyer, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>25</sup> *Constitutional and Governmental Rights of the Mormons as Defined by Congress and the Supreme Court of the United States* (Salt Lake City: J. H. Parry, 1890) conveniently reproduces the texts of the anti-bigamy law of 1862, the Poland bill of 1874, and the Edmunds and the Edmunds-Tucker enactments of the 1880's, together with reviews of Supreme Court cases. The *United States Statutes at Large*, of course, and the *Congressional Record* are primary sources for this legislation in all its stages. The *Reports of the Utah Commission after 1882* provide complete descriptions of political and social affairs in Utah for the period.

Hardly a presidential message after the Civil War failed to allude to the Mormon Question. President Grant, with Mormon-eaters like Vice President Schuyler Colfax and Dr. John P. Newman, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Washington, advising him, dealt heavily, reversing Andrew Johnson's unobtrusive policy. "It is not with the religion of the self-styled Saints that we are now dealing," he told Congress in 1872, "but their practices. . . . they will not be permitted to violate laws under the cloak of religion." He had found territorial officers "willing to perform their duty in a spirit of equity and with a due sense of sustaining the majesty of the law."<sup>26</sup>

President Hayes, after a visit to Salt Lake City with General Sherman in 1880 during which the Liberals made sure he got only their point of view, expressed a sentiment stronger even than Grant's: "To the re-establishment of the interests and principles which polygamy and Mormonism have imperilled, and fully reopen to the intelligent and virtuous immigrants of all creeds, that part of our domain which has been in a great degree closed to general immigration by the immoral institution, it is recommended that the government of the Territory of Utah be reorganized."<sup>27</sup> President Garfield the next year charged that "The Mormon Church not only offends the moral sense of manhood . . . but prevents the administration of justice through ordinary instrumentalities of law."<sup>28</sup> After Garfield's assassination, which in some quarters was laid to a Mormon fanatic, President Arthur felt convinced that the Utah problem could be solved only "by the exercise of absolute federal force."<sup>29</sup> Even President Cleveland, far less inclined to press the campaign — he refused to sign the Edmunds-Tucker bill in 1887 — was persuaded that immigration "reenforced the people upholding polygamy" and called upon Congress in 1883 to pass a law "to prevent the importation of Mormons into the country."<sup>30</sup>

## II

With immigration central to the whole problem, it was inevitable that the contest between the Mormons and the United States should move into the international arena. "I would thank you to keep your Mormons at home," President Buchanan told Lord Clarendon, Secretary of Foreign Affairs for Great Britain. "The English Mormon is a strange article."<sup>31</sup> In 1879 Secretary of State William M. Evarts dispatched a lengthy circular to

<sup>26</sup> James D. Richardson, ed., *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897), X, 4105.

<sup>27</sup> Richardson, *op. cit.*, XI, 4458.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, XI, 4601.

<sup>29</sup> Salt Lake *Daily Tribune*, December 11, 1883, quoted in Dwyer, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

<sup>30</sup> Richardson, *op. cit.*, XI, 4947.

<sup>31</sup> John Bassett Moore, ed., *The Works of James Buchanan* (Philadelphia, 1908-11), X, 318, quoted in Cannon, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

United States diplomatic and consular officers in Europe directing attention to the growth of Mormonism through recruitment abroad.<sup>32</sup> He instructed them to seek the aid of foreign governments in preventing the departure of "large numbers" of "prospective law-breakers," and through the public press of the principal cities and ports of Europe to call attention to the subject and the "determined purpose" of the United States to eradicate polygamy. The Supreme Court had that year upheld the constitutionality of the anti-bigamy enactment and had dispelled any doubt concerning the ability and intent of the government to enforce it.<sup>33</sup> Friendly powers, Evarts felt, would not willingly permit the United States to become a "resort or refuge for the crowds of misguided men and women whose offenses against morality and decency would become intolerable" in their own land, and he asked them to take steps to check "these criminal enterprises by agents who are thus operating beyond the reach of the law of the United States."

Under whatever specious guise the subject [of polygamy] may be presented by those engaged in instigating the European movement to swell the numbers of the law-defying Mormons of Utah, the bands and organizations 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 statute as penitentiary offenses.<sup>34</sup>

What Evarts failed to envision was how any government was going to recognize potential lawbreakers and under what pretext they could be prosecuted before the fact. And if America nursed the serpent by permitting Mormon agents to go abroad in the first place, she could not expect the countries of Europe to kill it by cutting off its tail. The *London Times* ridiculed the whole idea, while the *London Examiner* could not refrain from commenting on the "plaintive appeal": "The morality of this circular is admirable; the logic is lamentable." The *Examiner*, convinced there was not injustice enough in England to punish the Mormons, was amazed: "The Great Republic has afforded a refuge to the visionaries of Europe. Into its bosom have been welcomed the professors of every faith and of no faith at all. Imperialist Princes and democratic Nihilists equally go through Garden Island unnoticed. . . . Why do they not prevent the landing of

<sup>32</sup> "Diplomatic Correspondence, Circular No. 10, August 9, 1879, Sent to Diplomatic and Consular Officers of the United States," *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1879* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), pp. 11, 12.

<sup>33</sup> In the celebrated *Reynolds* case the United States Supreme Court ruled that "Laws are made for the government of actions, and while they cannot interfere with mere religious belief and opinions, they may with practices." The constitutional guaranty of religious freedom was not intended to prohibit legislation in respect to polygamy: "A criminal intent is generally an element of crime; but every man is presumed to intend the necessary and legitimate consequences of what he knowingly does. . . . Ignorance of a fact may sometimes be taken as evidence of a want of criminal intent, but not ignorance of the law." *Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 145, 166 (1878). Violation of the Anti-Polygamy Act of 1862 called for a fine of \$500 and a prison sentence of five years.

<sup>34</sup> *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1879*, p. 11.



German Socialists, Russian Nihilists, and Irish Finians?"<sup>35</sup> Elder N. C. Flygare, in charge of a company of Mormon emigrants from Scandinavia arriving on the *S. S. Wyoming* a month after the Evarts communique, noted that the Secretary's letter had been widely published abroad but few believed anything so absurd could be seriously fathered by the American government. The Mormons, he said, were not disturbed by it in the least.<sup>36</sup>

The Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs felt that "joining the Mormon community can in no wise be likened to the resolution to contract polygamous alliances," and found it impossible "according to the principles generally admitted in penal law" to see in Mormon proselyting "an attempt to incite to a violation of the laws of the United States."<sup>37</sup> While he deplored the expatriation of Danish subjects, he did not see that Denmark was empowered to stop the abuse. The United Kingdoms of Norway and Sweden indicated that the government and public sentiment were "averse to having their population victimized and depleted by immoral and criminal means" and agreed to discourage Mormon activity as far as consistent with law.<sup>38</sup> All three countries promised a campaign of enlightenment through notices in the press against the "fallacious promises" and "the enticements of the emissaries of Mormonism."<sup>39</sup>

The official warnings sharpened anti-Mormon feeling. Prussia banished the American missionaries. In Copenhagen a sectarian convention could agree on no matter of business or doctrine until the subject of Mormonism came up, "when all immediately united in the sentiment 'The Mormons must go.'"<sup>40</sup> During the decade 1880 to 1890, however, the missionary force abroad actually more than doubled — not a few of the elders were refugee polygamists evading the Edmunds law — although conversions and emigration fell off. Convert-emigrants from Scandinavia, for example, numbered fewer than 1,000 annually during the 1880's.

But Mormon immigration remained in the popular mind an alarming invasion capable of perverting the nation's morals. Reported the *Omaha Herald* in 1885: "The arrival in the United States of a few hundred Danes who have been brought here by the Mormon church is the signal for an outcry in the eastern press against their admission into the country, and calling on the government to stop this kind of immigration." The *Herald* defended a program which might be "a plain matter of business" in increasing the wealth of the territory and the church, but which "combines with it positive Christian charity."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *London Examiner*, August 16, 1879, quoted in *New York Times*, August 30, 1879.

<sup>36</sup> *New York Times*, September 17, 1879.

<sup>37</sup> Baron Rosenörn-Lehn to Secretary Evarts, January 31, 1880, *Foreign Relations* 1880, p. 936.

<sup>38</sup> John L. Stevens to Secretary Evarts, September 23, 1879, *Foreign Relations* 1879, p. 964.

<sup>39</sup> M. J. Cramer to Secretary Evarts, October 17, 1879, *Foreign Relations* 1879, p. 345.

<sup>40</sup> *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* (Liverpool), XLVII (October 26, 1885), 683.

The majority thought otherwise. In January, 1882 alone, mass meetings were held in cities as scattered as Chicago, Portland (Maine), Rochester, St. Paul, and Pittsburg, where governors, congressmen, and clergy helped pass resolutions calling for enforcement of the anti-bigamy law and the prevention of statehood for Utah.<sup>42</sup> At the Madison Avenue Congregational Church in New York, Reverend Dr. Newman wailed that the locomotive, which was supposed to sound the death-knell of Mormonism, instead had drawn to Utah "trains laden with converts . . . brought from across the seas." It pained him to see the country calmly permitting these foreigners to be clothed with all the rights of citizenship. "But one official diplomatic protest was ever made against such proceedings, and Mr. Evarts deserves all honor for making it."<sup>43</sup> Methodist ministers gathered in Philadelphia in February unanimously invited "the attention of the executive authorities at Washington to the relation of European emigration procured by Mormon emissaries to the continuance and enlargement of this great evil, and we suggest careful inquiry whether more effective measures may not be taken to anticipate and prevent this constant supply of this organized iniquity."<sup>44</sup> In Utah itself Governor Eli Murray in 1883 quaked a warning to the Secretary of the Interior "and through you the country" that they were beset by "another irrepressible conflict."<sup>45</sup> In vain did John T. Caine, delegate from Utah, in denouncing the Edmunds-Tucker bill in 1887, call attention to the fact that the last census had showed a more rapid decrease in foreign-born population in Utah than in twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia.<sup>46</sup>

The common image pictured Utah's "defiant polygamists" being "reinforced by thousands of converts secured by their missionaries in the Southern States and in Europe," as the *New York Times* editorialized in October, 1883. The *Arizona* had just landed 505 converts: "Four-fifths of these misguided persons came from the Scandinavian peninsula."<sup>47</sup> Even an

<sup>41</sup> Quoted without date in "De skandinaviske Emigranter," *Skandnaviens Stjerne*, XXXV (December 15, 1885), 93.

<sup>42</sup> Reported in the *New York Times* during January, 1882.

<sup>43</sup> *New York Times*, January 30, 1882.

<sup>44</sup> *New York Times*, February 14, 1882.

<sup>45</sup> "Defying the Laws in Utah. Gov. Murray asks for military aid in enforcing the acts of Congress," *New York Times*, October 16, 1883.

<sup>46</sup> Cannon, *op. cit.*, p. 184, citing *Congressional Record*, House, January 12, 1887.

<sup>47</sup> *New York Times*, June 24, 1884. On May 27, 1886, the *Times* dramatized the relationship of polygamy and immigration in a news story "Convicts and Converts": "Somewhere in the course of their westward journey to the land of the polygamists the 17 Mormon converts from Iceland whom the *Arizona* brought to this port on Monday may meet the special car in which the 13 Mormons are journeying eastward to Detroit. If these two groups of Mormons could be brought face to face, the deluded immigrants from Iceland might enlarge their small stock of knowledge about the nature and perils of Mormonism, for the thirteen occupants of the special car are convicts [polygamists indicted under the Edmunds law] on their way to the penitentiary in Detroit."

observer like John Codman, whose *Mormon Country* had given an accurate and sympathetic description of the 1870's, now joined the alarm: "Most of the 'plural wives' of the present time," he wrote in 1881, "come from those Scandinavian lands where chastity is scarcely considered a virtue, but is readily yielded for earthly profit, to say nothing of celestial glory. There is a market for them in the small settlements and on ranches, where they prefer to be members of the family, even of the second or third grade, rather than to accept the position of servants." In his view, such women were criminals. On arriving at Castle Garden they should be warned of the consequences of violating the anti-bigamy statute, and if the government considered the abolition of polygamy of as much importance as cities regarded the suppression of houses of ill-fame, "let it make similar periodical raids on the farm houses of Utah." He was sounder when he asked, "What more, in addition to carrying out the present laws, can be done to hasten the work which railroads, newspapers, and fashions are fast accomplishing?"<sup>48</sup>

In the anti-Mormon campaign, the common fallacy that the church brought the immigrant over at its own expense made its Perpetual Emigrating Fund the object of special attack.<sup>49</sup> The Edmunds Law of 1882, begotten, as the Mormons felt, "by prejudice, conceived in ignorance, and brought forth in hate,"<sup>50</sup> did not lay the axe to the root of immigration. Territorial governor Eli H. Murray in his annual report to the Secretary of the Interior in 1883 protested against the special legal privileges under which the P.E.F. Company operated. "By this act [of incorporation in 1850] the whole system of emigration is handed over by the legislature to a corporation under the control of the Church. No other system has by law been authorized or permitted in Utah, and this rich corporation continues as a part of the Church and State machinery to gather converts from all parts of the world."<sup>51</sup> An amendment was consequently added to the Edmunds-Tucker bill, then before Congress, which would annul the laws which had created the P.E.F. Company. The Act of 1887 did disincorporate it as part of a similar action against the church itself.<sup>52</sup> After bitter court proceedings the company was dissolved and a receiver appointed to assume charge of its assets. Its property consisted of "a safe, desk, records, account

<sup>48</sup> John Codman, "Mormonism," *International Review*, September, 1881, p. 232.

<sup>49</sup> The Fund was revolving, made up of advance deposits, savings, and outright contributions, a pooling of the emigrants' resources, not a gift, and it was expected that assistance from the Fund would be repaid. See my article, "Mormons from Scandinavia, 1850-1900: A Shepherded Migration," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXIII (August, 1954), 226-46, for a detailed description of the operation of the Fund.

<sup>50</sup> First Presidency, *To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in General Conference Assembled*, April 6, 1886 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1886), p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> "Annual Report of the Governor of Utah," in Secretary of the Interior, *Annual Report*, 1883 (48th Cong., 1st sess., House Executive Documents, No. 1, part 5, XI, 627-37).

<sup>52</sup> 24 Stat. 634-41.

books, promissory notes, paper of various kinds, and \$2.25 in defaced silver coins," and the company's statement as of November 10, 1887, showed total assets of \$417,968.50, nearly all in the form of promissory notes, uncollectable and of no value."<sup>53</sup> The strength of the "rich corporation" had never lain in idle wealth but in constant use as a revolving fund. Its life, now over, had drained into the lives of the people it had assisted.

Though it was not until the Act of March 3, 1891, that the specification "polygamists" was added to the federal list of classes excluded from immigration, the popular and official agitation of the 1880's made things increasingly unpleasant for proselytes at ports of arrival, where previously they had experienced little trouble. To the anti-Mormons it seemed that more shiploads of converts arrived after the Evarts communique and the Edmunds Act than before. Since it was "assisted immigration," there were determined efforts to exclude the Mormons as paupers. Superintendent Jackson of Castle Garden detained twenty-five converts — four families — from Iceland in July, 1886, because they could not show more than \$25 among them. Mormon agent Hart, who was ready to supply them with tickets to Utah, argued that they would be provided with homes as soon as they arrived and there was no danger of their becoming public charges.<sup>54</sup> In August, Immigration Commissioner Edward Stephenson detained forty-five considered paupers out of a company of 301 Mormon immigrants arriving on the S.S. *Wyoming*. All were eventually permitted to enter but a woman and three children who were shipped back to England.<sup>55</sup> In September, Stephenson detained forty-four in another company by "a strained application" of the pauper statute. Judge Andrews of the New York Supreme Court released them on writs of habeas corpus and they went on to Utah.<sup>56</sup> Every company that year witnessed some detentions. Never had the Mormon immigrants been subjected to such rigid questioning.

For Commissioner Stephenson the Mormons were a perplexity. On July 15, 1886, he wrote a letter to acting Secretary of the Treasury C. S. Fairchild, calling attention to the difficulty of enforcing the Act to Regulate Immigration of August 3, 1882. He considered the requirement of a \$500 bond for paupers invalid but he believed that the Commissioners were authorized by law to exclude the shiploads of Mormon converts, and asked

<sup>53</sup> Gustive O. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom* (Francestown, New Hampshire: Marshall Jones Co., 1947), p. 278.

<sup>54</sup> "Mormons with Little Money," *New York Times*, July 19, 1886.

<sup>55</sup> Andrew Jensen, *Church Chronology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), entry for August 21, 1886.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for September 1, 1886; "Emigranter standsede i New York," *Skandinaviens stjerne*, XXXVI (October 1, 1886), 10.

that he and his associates be instructed to bar them out. The *Nevada* had just landed 497 Mormons; two more shiploads of 700 were shortly expected; Stephenson urged shrilly that they should not be allowed to land.<sup>57</sup> The *New York Times* expressed its editorial sympathy with Stephenson's difficulty, but "while we are of the opinion that the nation suffers by the admission of these persons, we cannot see that the law provides for their exclusion." They could not be excluded merely as potential law-breakers, and as for pauperism, the church "sees to it that no converts come in that condition." A possible loophole was that perhaps the immigration authorities need not accept Mormon promises to provide. Yet it was too evident that there were no Mormons in almshouses.<sup>58</sup>

The detention of part of a company of 145 Saints, chiefly British, a few Scandinavian, who arrived at New York on the S.S. *Wisconsin* in the fall of 1888, received considerable notoriety. According to the press, they were mostly "young females, New Mormons, freshly recruited for immoral purposes."<sup>59</sup> The cry went up for their deportation. It developed, however, that the emigrant party actually consisted of 75 men, 60 women, the rest children, and that the individuals detained were three families and five boys and three girls under sixteen years of age without natural or legal guardian, though accompanied by missionaries. A Swiss family was held because of an imbecile son. A Mrs. Christine Patterson was "guilty of being 53 years of age and having with her two innocent grandchildren."<sup>60</sup> An investigation from Washington and assistance from the Guion Line — long patronized by the church — and Utah's delegate to Congress brought "obstructing officers to terms," and another "Mormon menace" passed into history.<sup>61</sup>

In 1891 members of a special commission appointed by the United States Treasury Department to conduct a general immigration inquiry visited Guion and Company's offices and Mormon headquarters in Liverpool, examined the records, secured "full information, and concluded the accusations against the Mormons respecting emigration from Europe were without foundation."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> "Paupers and Mormons," *New York Times*, August 2, 1886.

<sup>58</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>59</sup> "The Delayed Emigrants," *Millennial Star*, L (October 29, 1888), 702, quoting a variety of contemporary newspaper accounts.

<sup>60</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>61</sup> In reporting the episode, the *Millennial Star* noted that the Saints were not altogether without blame — people in Utah often arranged to have children of relatives brought over without attending to all preliminaries; they should not afford port officials any pretext for venting anti-Mormon spleen. *Millennial Star*, L (October 29, 1888), 702.

<sup>62</sup> *Liverpool Courier*, July 23, 1891, quoted in "American Immigration Commissioners," *Millennial Star*, LIII (August 3, 1891), 491.

## III

A local attack on Mormon recruiting, an attack early and unrelenting, had been to deny the convert-immigrants citizenship because of their allegiance to a church considered treasonable to the government. In 1857 Judge W. W. Drummond objected that "a certain tool of Gov. Young, named Appleby," as clerk of the Supreme Court "would occasionally go to the houses of those English Mormons, administer to them an oath, give them a sort of certificate, and pronounce them naturalized citizens." In this way, he charged, alien-born citizens, not legally naturalized according to the acts of Congress, cast the majority of votes and held many of the offices. "The laws of the Territory are nearly all void from the beginning in consequence of being passed and made by alien enemies of the country. . . . No man was voted for unless first nominated by Brigham Young." Judge Drummond asserted that "fifty a day of those poor, deluded and silly creatures were brought into Court as Jurors, and each for himself would swear that he was a 'naturalized Citizen,' " but examination of his papers showed that "this Ajax of the law Appleby" had administered the oath outside of court and "in the name of Israel's God" had pronounced him citizen.<sup>63</sup>

Twenty-five years later George Q. Cannon, English convert and perennial Mormon delegate to Congress, whose own naturalization was questioned, was meeting similar accusations: "He knows it is charged that the Mormon people consist principally of the very lowest classes of Europe, people who neither know nor care a whit about our form or system of government; . . . that many of these are not bona fide citizens of the United States . . . that it is asserted that he has each time been returned as a Delegate to Congress by the votes of these alleged aliens."<sup>64</sup>

Associate Justice Thomas J. Drake, holding district court in Provo in 1866, ruled that the probate courts had no power to issue naturalization papers, and all that had been issued were illegal, null, and void. He refused papers to any man who defied the anti-polygamy act of Congress. "We are proud to record," editorialized the *New York Times*, "that the Judges of this Territory are firm in the discharge of official duty. . . . The U. S. Courts in Utah are now considered an honor to the country."<sup>65</sup> District Attorney Charles Hempstead at the same time denied petitions for naturalization coming from those practicing polygamy. In 1870 Chief Justice

<sup>63</sup> "How Aliens Were Naturalized in Utah — Letter from Judge Drummond," *New York Times*, August 24, 1857.

<sup>64</sup> "Saints of Mormondom. Visit to John Taylor and George Q. Cannon," *New York Times*, April 11, 1881.

<sup>65</sup> "Polygamy and Citizenship. The Courts of Utah Have No Power to Issue Naturalization Papers," *New York Times*, June 7, 1866.

James B. McKean, eager to make the Cullom bill law for Utah, went further: he denied naturalization to those who simply believed in the doctrine. When the judge asked John C. Sandberg, a Swede, and William Horsley, an Englishman, whether or not they regarded the Act of 1862 as binding upon them, Sandberg replied he believed it right to obey the laws of God rather than of man, and Horsley declined to answer, whereupon McKean refused them citizenship, declaring they were "not of good moral character."<sup>66</sup>

To one sympathetic observer, the grim efforts to deny Mormon immigrants the rights of citizenship were among the evils attendant on "Pro-Consular governments," enabling a man like McKean to "ride roughshod over Article 5 of the Amendments of the Constitution": "It was his wont, not only to anticipate indictment, trial, and conviction, by the sentence he imposed, but to compel men to testify against themselves when applying for naturalization, and then, upon the testimony thus tyrannically and unconstitutionally obtained, he uniformly refused to naturalize them." Ironically, the same men, "decayed politicians," who had enfranchised promiscuous and devil-worshipping Negroes in the South, would disfranchise polygamous Mormons. "The reason for this decided preference for the idle, shiftless, thieving Negro, as an elector, over the industrious, thrifty Mormon, who believes in a religious delusion, does not readily appear to one not versed in American politics." The explanation was simply that the carpet-bagger expected Negro votes "to keep himself and his friends forever *in*, while he knows that Mormon votes, intelligently cast, will keep himself and friends forever *out*, with no hope of handling Mormon money. . . ."<sup>67</sup>

The immigrant vote was, of course, of greatest importance to the church. "Get clothed at once with all the rights of an American citizen," Apostle George A. Smith urged the Saints in a sermon in 1874 in Richfield, in the heart of Scandinavian country. "You have a judge in this district who is a just and honorable man, and who does not consider himself a missionary sent here expressly to convert you. If you lived in Salt Lake City I would tell you to see Judge McKean and his whole 'ring' in perdition before taking the false oath he seeks to impose." They should not shirk their duty if drawn on a jury; they should not lie before God or man but convict anyone indicted for polygamy entered into since 1862 if it were proved. "We know that law is unconstitutional, and we can beat them in their own courts. Don't be nervous about it. Take a little valerian tea and put your trust in God." Unaware that events would prove him wrong and that it would

<sup>66</sup> Whitney, *op. cit.*, II, 558.

<sup>67</sup> Ballard G. Dunn, *How to Solve the Mormon Problem. Three Letters* (New York: American News Co., 1877), pp. 15-16.

take more than trust or tea to get the Saints out of their predicament, he urged them to show the world they were a quiet, law-abiding people. "We have stood a good deal, and we can stand it to the end."<sup>68</sup>

Utah's granting the vote to women seemed to anti-Mormons a special act of contempt for the government. "... girls under age and alien women with the odor of the emigrant ship still upon their clothes, without ever having taken an oath of allegiance to the United States, without the slightest idea of the meaning of the act they are performing, or what is intended by it, cast their votes as they are instructed to in some tongue unknown to the ordinary American and go away dazed." Were it not for the steady influx of foreigners, "low, base-born foreigners, hereditary bondsmen," Mormonism's "two dreadful features," polygamy and the exalting of church over state, would "die out in America in two generations."<sup>69</sup> The *Gentile Circular* objected to citizenship being conferred upon alien women by their marriage with naturalized or native-born citizens. "If woman is equally a *femme sole* after as she is before marriage, by what subtle fiction can she be supposed to take upon herself the citizenship of her husband?"<sup>70</sup> And the *Circular* cited a maneuver during Logan's municipal election in 1874 as an illustration of the misuse of woman suffrage in Utah: there the liberal Mormons and non-Mormons joined forces and gave the church party "such a scare that at about noon, on the day of the election, the brethren feared their little union of church and state was in danger. So the bishops fell back on their old plan, and brought out the Female Relief Society in full force." Mormons who had not voted the church ticket were required to be rebaptized in penance, and a number of young men who refused to be rebaptized were excommunicated. "No man can be a free, independent American citizen, and at the same time be a good citizen of the Kingdom of God."<sup>71</sup>

A late decision subscribing to that conviction, and still in the spirit of Judge Drummond's charges of 1857, was Judge Thomas J. Anderson's denial of citizenship to applicants in Salt Lake City in November, 1889, because the religious covenants of the Endowment House, which an apostate Mormon divulged, gave highest allegiance to the Kingdom of God and were considered treasonable to the United States.<sup>72</sup> Mormon President Wilford Woodruff had the Endowment House razed forthwith, a dramatic preliminary to his Manifesto the following year which discontinued polyg-

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in John Codman, "Through Utah," *Galaxy*, XX (November, 1875), 624. Said Codman, "We have listened to worse sermons than this."

<sup>69</sup> Goodwin, *op. cit.*, p. 757.

<sup>70</sup> *Circular* (Salt Lake City), February 9, 1874.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, April 13, 1874.

<sup>72</sup> Jensen, *op. cit.*, entries for November 11, 29, 1889; *The Herald and Presbyter*, May 28, 1913.



amy itself. In his Manifesto, President Woodruff cited the current accusations — blood atonement, the murder of apostates, the power of bishops' courts over civil courts, the dictation of the ballot and of temporal affairs, the treasonable nature of the endowment, the union of church and state — and refuted them. And he considered "all attempts to exclude aliens from naturalization and citizens from the exercise of elective franchise, solely because they are members of the Mormon Church," as "unpolitic, un-republican, and dangerous encroachments upon civil and religious liberty."<sup>73</sup> That was evidence enough for Judge Charles S. Zane to rule in October, 1890, that membership in the Mormon Church should no longer be a barrier to citizenship.<sup>74</sup>

#### IV

But some crusaders were convinced that polygamy had simply gone underground in Utah after 1890 and, apparently never thinking to consult actual statistics, they declared that recruiting abroad for sinister purposes was being prosecuted with vigor. A pair of American alarmists, touring Europe on behalf of the Interdenominational Council of Women for Christian and Patriotic Service, tried as late as 1909 to rouse foreign governments to stop Mormon emigration. But in Denmark they were told they should look to their own reforms at home, and in England they found that "shipping interests opposed an anti-Mormon crusade."<sup>75</sup> A few years earlier the highly combustible Swedish "Föreningen Vaksamhet" or Vigilance Society urged government action against the Mormons, but it could produce only hearsay evidence of "white slavery."<sup>76</sup>

The agitation by this time was anti-climax, a temporary violation of the gentleman's agreement of the 1890's that polygamy would be allowed to die a natural death. When the widely publicized Senate investigation of Reed

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in George Q. Cannon, *History of the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Geo. Q. Cannon & Sons, 1891), p. 19; see also First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, "Petition for Amnesty Sent to the President of the United States, December 19, 1891," *The Contributor* (Salt Lake City), XII (February, 1892), 196-97.

The doctrine of "blood atonement," which the early Mormons allegedly believed in but never practiced — though Brigham Young on one occasion defended the theory from the pulpit — held that certain sinners, too wicked for ordinary means of regeneration, could be redeemed only by the sacrificial shedding of their own blood. The "endowment" was a series of spiritual blessings, "endowments from on high," received in the Endowment House ritual, and still administered in Mormon temples, blessings considered necessary for exaltation in the highest glory in the world to come. Mormon mysteries, like the Masonic at one time, were grossly feared and misunderstood.

<sup>74</sup> Jensen, *op. cit.*, entries for October 7, 1890, and December 3, 1890.

<sup>75</sup> Hans P. and Blanch K. Freece, *How Mormons Recruit Abroad* (New York, 1911), p. 18. As late as 1913 the Danish yearbook, *De Forenede Staters danske Almanak, Haand- og Aarbog* (Seattle, 1913), was telling Danes applying for citizenship that, among other things, they had to declare they were "neither anarchist nor Mormon."

<sup>76</sup> Gustav Sundbärg, *Mormonvärfningen i Sverige (Emigrationsutredningen, III, Stockholm, 1910)*, p. 3.

Smoot, Senator-elect from Utah in 1903, concluded without scandal, the conflict and crusade gave way to an era of good feeling and the Mormons became in time eminently respectable, so respectable, in fact, that diehard enemies now accused the national government of subservience to Wall Street in dealing with the Mormons: it was good business to treat them well.<sup>77</sup>

The legislation aimed at drying up the main tributary to Utah's unorthodoxies had simply hastened what changing social and economic conditions were already accomplishing. Zion, once preached with so much intensity and conviction and expressed in a great program of immigration, was no longer a closed society. It had to accommodate itself to the times. The Gentile had come to Utah, and with him the world. Mormonism spiritualized its message and no longer frightened the nation as an *imperium in imperio*. Insisting less on building a literal Kingdom, it joined hands with eastern capital to build instead a greater Utah. With the establishment of a state Bureau of Immigration in 1911, what had been almost exclusively a Mormon enterprise turned secular, and Commissioner H. T. Haines in a letter to T. V. Powderley could advertise Utah as "a splendid state for the best classes of immigrants."<sup>78</sup> The chastened Mormons had joined the Union at last, leaving preachers and politicians to look for other causes.

---

<sup>77</sup> Bruce Kinney, *Frontier Missionary Problems* (New York: Revell, 1918), pp. 83-96, held that since 1890 the whole country had catered to the Mormons.

<sup>78</sup> State of Utah, *First Report of the State Bureau of Immigration, Labor, and Statistics* (Salt Lake City: Arrow Press, 1911), p. 16.