

MORMONS AND GENTILES ON THE ATLANTIC

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THE emigration of Mormons from Europe to Nauvoo and Salt Lake City made up only a small fraction of the movement of people from the Old World to the United States in the nineteenth century. But just as the Mormons were convinced that their emigration was divinely inspired, so they never ceased to claim that the details of its organisation possessed unique merit. In 1849 an editorial in *Millennial Star* exclaimed:

O! What a wide difference there is between the emigrating Saints and other emigrants! With the one there is union, harmony and order, with prayer and thanksgiving and songs of rejoicing; while with the other there is disorder and confusion, with cursing and bitterness and every evil passion, that not only renders themselves miserable, but any other well-disposed person that perchance may be found among the wretched list.¹

Ten years later, Mormon superiority was claimed even more confidently:

Yet the English Government, coupled with the Brights and social reformers of the nation, who have seen in emigration the door of emancipation for down-trodden and distressed people, have not been able to grapple with emigration policy in that masterly manner which has been shown in the emigration operations of this Church. In those operations, under the chief directorship of Brigham, and carried out by his agents on behalf of the Church, the Saints have outdone a powerful Government backed by a host of reformers belonging to a nation of boundless wealth and professed philanthropy. Such facts may surely give cause to the Saints to be proud of what they have done.²

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¹*Latter Day Saints' Millennial Star*, XI (February 15, 1849), 57.

²*Ibid.*, XXI (September 10, 1859), 589-90.

To some extent, such claims were supported by Gentile contemporaries. In 1855, when the ship *S. Curling* reached New York, a reporter wrote:

The vessel was the cleanest emigrant ship we have ever seen; notwithstanding the large number of passengers, order, cleanliness and comfort prevailed on all hands, the between-decks were as sweet and well-ventilated as the cabin . . . It would be well if the packet ships that ply between this port and Liverpool were to imitate the system of management that prevailed on this ship.³

Four years later the master of the *William Tapscott* declared that of all the ninety thousand emigrants he had carried across the Atlantic, this Mormon company had given him the least trouble.⁴ It is the purpose of this article to show in what manner, and to what extent, the Mormons improved upon the current methods of transatlantic migration, and to discuss the extent to which the system they adopted resulted from a conscious attempt to correct existing abuses, or, on the contrary, from factors embedded in the general principles of Church organisation.

In the period of large-scale Mormon emigration, from 1840 to the early 'eighties, there were in force, though sometimes only for a year or two each, eleven British and eight American statutes of major importance, as well as state laws and British Orders in Council, concerned with emigration on the Atlantic. No attempt will be made here to examine these in detail or to provide pedantically minute documentation. What has to be understood is simply the aim of the legislation, the main provisions as they were consolidated in 1855, the machinery of enforcement, and the effectiveness of the whole effort to guarantee the emigrants' safety and welfare.

The aims of the laws were, first, to prevent fraud at the ports and, second, to ensure safety and a minimum of comfort at sea. One official statement of 1842 summarised the matter thus:

To regulate the number of passengers in each ship and to provide for their proper accommodation on board; to

³*New York Tribune*, May 23, 1855.

⁴*New York Herald*, May 14, 1859.

ensure a proper supply of provisions and water for their use; to provide for the seaworthiness of the vessels; to protect the emigrants from the numerous frauds to which their helplessness and inexperience expose them.⁵

Against the drawing up of a comprehensive code were ranged both general laissez-faire prejudice and the clear understanding that each regulation would tend to drive up shipowners' costs to the point at which poor people would be unable to afford a passage.⁶ Even on paper, therefore, the scope of the protective effort was limited.

At the port of embarkation, the law provided for the licensing of passenger brokers by justices of the peace, and later required them to find sureties for good behavior. In 1855 licensing was extended to runners, who brought the brokers their business and charged a commission for doing so, just as the brokers received a commission from shipowners.⁷ It was therefore possible to exercise some control over the issue of tickets, and to minimise the risk of theft of baggage, fraudulent sale of provisions and rent of lodgings, and similar crude forms of exploitation. To enforce these and other aspects of the law, there existed from 1833 at the principal British ports emigration officers, usually retired naval lieutenants or even captains; from 1840 these men were responsible to the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners in London. Often these officers could get aggrieved emigrants' money refunded without court action, and at other times the magistrates' court would leave to them the assessment of compensation to emigrants.⁸ They did much to deserve their early

⁵Report of Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, Parliamentary Papers 1842, XXV, 69.

⁶Report of Emigration Committee, Parliamentary Papers 1826, V, questions 329, 600. Speech by Lord Mountague in 1848, Hansard, Third Series XCVII, column 536. Dr. MacDonagh has described the development of the Passenger Acts, as an example of the breach in laissez-faire doctrine brought about by inescapable practical problems, in his valuable article, "The Regulation of the Emigrant Traffic from the United Kingdom, 1842-55," *Irish Historical Studies*, IX (September, 1954), 162-89.

⁷The commercial system at Liverpool can be found described in the evidence of shipowners and others given to the Select Committee on the Passengers' Acts, Parliamentary Papers 1851, XIX, and to the Select Committee on Emigrant Ships, Parliamentary Papers 1854, XIII.

⁸Report of Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, Parliamentary Papers 1845, XXVII, 98-99. *Liverpool Mercury*, June 14, 1850; November 22, 1853. Fred H. Hitchins, *The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission* (Philadelphia, 1931), 141, 145, 152, 155.

appellation of "the appointed poor man's friend."⁹ But their effectiveness was limited by the size of their job. They had to enforce laws in a great variety of technical detail; yet, at Liverpool they numbered only five, at a time when a dozen or more ships carrying three thousand emigrants might sail in a single day.¹⁰ There is some evidence in the years around 1850 that the stipendiary magistrate at Liverpool supplemented the work of the emigration officers by displaying conspicuous zeal in protecting emigrants. Mr. Rushton dealt with failures of owners to provide alternatives for ships that did not sail; with thefts of baggage; with brokers acting without licence; with extortion in selling stores; with taking on board excess passengers after lawful clearance. Licences were declared forfeit; fines of £5 or £10 were imposed; three months' imprisonment was the sentence on an old offender found among emigrants' baggage.¹¹

The emigrants also had to be protected at sea. Surveys were made of the ships. Details were laid down for the construction of decks and for ventilation. The amount of space to be provided for each passenger was defined so that each ship had a maximum lawful complement. To serve as a check on this, passenger lists early were required. Rations came to be specified in increasing detail. While in 1849 Earl Grey had been able to say that the acts merely ensured a reserve "in case of the passengers' own provisions failing them,"¹² by 1855 all the essential rations were to be provided by the ship, with regular distribution, and cooking where appropriate.¹³ As for emigrants' health, inspection before embarkation was intended to ensure that no one went on board ill, to start epidemics during the voyage. But an observer

⁹Report of Agent-General for Emigration, Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, XL, 9.

¹⁰The point was made forcefully in the House of Commons in 1852, Hansard, Third Series, CXXII, column 69.

¹¹*Liverpool Mercury*, January 12, 1849; December 20, 1850; September 10, 1852; November 22, 1853; June 23, 1854. These are but a few examples from the mass of evidence in this newspaper, even for 1848-54, the years studied.

¹²Hansard, Third Series, CVI, columns 382-83.

¹³Ships were required to carry stores for a voyage of about double the average length. But although the 1855 act prescribed even sugar, butter and condiments, emigrants were always advised to take smoked ham, pickles, beef tea, lime juice, etc., as supplements. *Wiley and Putnam's Emigrants' Guide* (London, 1845), 22-27. R. Druitt, *Medical Hints for Emigrants* (London, 1850), 1-4.

in 1850 said that the procedure was extremely casual: "What's your name? Are you well? Hold out your tongue. All right."¹⁴ On board, a medicine chest had to be supplied. There was no possibility of finding enough doctors to man each ship. But the British act of 1855 required a doctor in any ship carrying more than three hundred passengers; even before that date some ship-owners had been offering free cabin passage to medical men.¹⁵ By the early 1850's, too, the laws came to require the separate berthing of single men, families, and single women. Supplementary Orders in Council ordered parties of men to be detailed for cleaning ship, and exhorted everyone to good behaviour.¹⁶

It is hard to decide how far these regulations were effective. The haste with which officials had to do their work, legal technicalities, the inability of emigrants to use their legal rights to the full—all combined to place obstacles in the way of enforcement of laws which themselves, for reasons already stated, were slow in becoming even approximately comprehensive. The ordinary procedure of prosecution could be applied, and as has been seen was applied, when offences against British law were committed on British soil, in British ships, or in any ship in British waters. In practice, however, foreign ships could not be proceeded against in this way for offences committed on the high seas. It is true that masters and owners of ships, whatever their nationality, had to enter into a bond, £2,000 in 1855, to comply with the provisions of the Passenger Acts. But on arrival in the United States, any emigrant who had been victimised was too eager to begin his new life to launch proceedings by which the bond could have been put in suit. Indeed, only his return to Britain would have sufficed, since no diplomatic procedure was worked out by which American courts or British consuls could certify that an offence had been committed, in such a way that a British court would act

¹⁴Vere Foster's description after a voyage in the steerage, Parliamentary Papers 1851, XL, 434.

¹⁵Hansard, Third Series, XCIV, columns 276-78. *Liverpool Mercury*, April 28, 1848; January 3, 1851; January 7, 1853. *Wiley and Putnam's Emigrants' Guide*, 58-59, assured its readers that "captains of the better class of ships are quite good medical men."

¹⁶*Colonisation Circular*, August 1848, 17. An abstract of Acts and Orders in force had to be displayed on board, while a still shorter version appeared on the Contract Ticket issued to each passenger.

upon it when the ship had recrossed the ocean.¹⁷ American laws existed—and in some years were more stringent than the British—and American courts might enforce them, but such evidence as is available suggests that rather little was done.¹⁸ No doubt this was due in part to the same unwillingness of the emigrant to begin legal proceedings; but in part it was due to lack of jurisdiction when, due to the Civil War, British ships came to dominate the North Atlantic emigrant traffic. The Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners summed up: "The result is that . . . where there is jurisdiction there are no witnesses, and . . . where there are witnesses there is no jurisdiction."¹⁹

In practice, emigrant conditions at sea showed a very slow improvement in the era of the sailing ship. It was accepted that because of the number of ships involved and the shortage of suitable men, it was impossible to introduce on the Atlantic the admirable system adopted in the government emigration to Australia, in which the key figure was a surgeon-superintendent responsible for discipline as well as health.²⁰ Provision for welfare at sea was therefore rudimentary, and emigrants had to rely on their own efforts or on the benevolence of individual ship's captains. Precise evidence is regrettably scanty. Stories of gross abuses tended to reach newspapers or official documents; for normal conditions it is very hard to make a fair assessment. Few emigrants kept diaries, and their letters described the strange sights of the New World rather than the conditions of the voyage. Cabin passengers, who wrote books, paid little attention to the steerage of the ships in which they travelled. It seems that, even before the 1855 act made it compulsory, passengers sometimes formed messes so as to organise distribution and cooking of their food. Some captains made regulations and appointed constables. Passengers might be encouraged to

¹⁷Hansard, Third Series, CXX, column 869. Reports of Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, Parliamentary Papers 1854, XXVIII, 29-32; 1854-55, XVII, 13, 27; 1868-69, XVII, 135-37.

¹⁸J. F. Maguire, *The Irish in America* (London, 1868), 211-12, quoting the Report of the Commissioner of Emigration, February, 1866. A report printed in 1873 is in *Senate Executive Document No. 23*, 43 Congress, 1 session, 11-12, 68-72, 78.

¹⁹Parliamentary Papers 1868-69, XVII, 135.

²⁰Report of Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, Parliamentary Papers 1842, XXV, 81. The Australian regulations appear in full in *Colonisation Circular*, 1847, 18-19.

elect a steward, cleaning squads, and committees to supervise the rations. But beyond that, little was done.²¹ When steam superseded sail on the North Atlantic in the later 'sixties, the resulting improvement in conditions probably was greater than all the laws had been able to achieve. "Steerage passage," as one advertisement put it, "includes an unlimited supply of provisions cooked and served up by the company's stewards."²² Some improvement took place in privacy, with partly or wholly enclosed berths, in ventilation and sanitation, in cleaning and in regular feeding. Observers agreed that steerage conditions, including food, were crude, though some of them thought that the poorer Europeans were better off during the voyage than at any other time of their lives.²³ Most important of all, the voyage now lasted ten or twelve days instead of thirty-five or more.

On arrival at the American port, emigrants came within the scope of a further series of American laws. The states were concerned mainly with regulations to avoid pauperism. New York State centralised a system of protection from 1847, with compulsory disembarkation at Castle Garden from 1855. There, emigrants found facilities for buying railroad tickets, changing money, meeting relatives, learning of lodgings and jobs without being exposed, at least until they reached the streets outside, to the exploitation of runners. From 1892, the federal installation

²¹Select Committee on Passengers' Acts, Parliamentary Papers 1851, XIX, questions 1466, 3330, 4476-78, 4599, 4996-98, 5306-7, 7355. Committee on Emigrant Ships, Parliamentary Papers 1854, XIII, questions 1496, 5836. Some captains may have taken as a model the regulations proposed by the Commissioners in 1843, but never adopted; see *Colonisation Circular*, May, 1844, 13-14; 1848, 17.

²²*Liverpool Daily Courier*, July 13, 1870, an advertisement for the Guion Line, on which the Mormons were then travelling. The annual reports of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners show that in 1863, 45.85% of passengers crossed the North Atlantic by steamship, while in 1870 the proportion was 95.77%.

²³Conditions in and immediately after the 1870's are described in three sources: *Senate Executive Document No. 23*, 43 Congress, 1 session; Report on Emigrant Ships by the Sanitary Committee of the Lancet (London, 1873); Board of Trade Inquiry into Accommodation for Emigrants on Atlantic Steamships, Parliamentary Papers 1881, LXXXIX. Reports of the years just before World War I seem to show worse conditions. I cannot be sure whether this resulted from more accurate observation, the more humane standards of the investigators, or an actual worsening of conditions in years of exceptionally heavy emigration. See the Report of the Immigration Committee, XXXVII, Steerage Conditions, *Senate Executive Document No. 753*, 61 Congress, 3 session; and Stephen Graham, *With Poor Immigrants to America* (London, 1914), 9-40.

of Ellis Island provided similar facilities for all who landed at New York, as well as an increasingly rigorous—though not by modern standards very rigorous—system of inspection.²⁴ The inland transport and distribution of emigrants, even in the early twentieth century, was wholly unregulated.

What has so far been said shows that the law provided least protection, and that enforcement of such laws as existed was least effective, on the high seas. Yet, in conditions of overcrowding, with seasickness, monotonous diet, lack of exercise and occupation, any measure of order would have been immensely valuable—whether in ensuring cleanliness, guaranteeing regular hot meals, defeating the petty tyranny of the worst officers and crews, or merely in keeping up the emigrants' spirits. Organised self-help would have been indispensable, for the captain and crew, however well-disposed, were fully occupied in sailing the ship. It was precisely here that the Mormons were to organise so effectively.

Mormon organisation began long before the emigrants arrived at Liverpool. Early each year, *Millennial Star* carried detailed instructions inviting applications and deposits of £1; describing the total fare and the scale of rations; giving information on the permitted amount of baggage; and offering advice regarding bedding, utensils, and other necessary equipment for the voyage.²⁵ Local leaders were urged to explain these articles, especially to those Church members who could not read.²⁶ Mormons who decided to emigrate could then make individual bookings by applying to Church headquarters at Liverpool. Increasingly, there grew up the practice of block-bookings from Conferences.²⁷ If large numbers travelled to the port from a single Conference, the president, or some other officer even if not

²⁴Castle Garden is well described in *New York Herald*, July 12, 1866; July 7, 1867. For Ellis Island, see Edward Corsi, *In the Shadow of Liberty* (New York, 1935), 72-81.

²⁵Among many examples, see *Millennial Star*, XVIII (January 12, 1856), 24-27.

²⁶*Ibid.*, XII (November 15, 1850), 347.

²⁷This was probably a result of schemes of financial assistance developed by the Church. In 1850, 96 from the Merthyr Tydfil Conference sailed in the *Josiah Bradlee* and 167 in *Joseph Badger*; in 1863, 170 from Manchester in the *Antarctic* and 234 from London in the *Amazon*. These and many other examples are in the Church Shipping Books (unpublished, Church Historian's Library, Salt Lake City).

himself emigrating, might accompany them. This was especially common in groups of Scandinavian Mormons who made the journey from Copenhagen or beyond, through Hamburg and Hull, to join the main migration at Liverpool.²⁸

The emigrants often found that the Church authorities had chartered the entire steerage accommodation of a ship. An official of a shipping company stated in 1851:

The Mormons have the greatest objections against going in any ship carrying other passengers than themselves; and when such is the case, they invariably stipulate that a partition shall be erected across the ship's lower decks, so as to separate them from all other passengers.²⁹

This should not be accepted as a completely valid generalisation. When steamships carrying more than a thousand passengers came to be used by the Mormons in the late 'sixties, the Church could hope to fill only a portion of the accommodations. Even in sailing ships separation could not always be achieved in the form of physical barriers, but it will be seen that when this was so, special precautions were likely to be taken.

It should not be thought that at Liverpool, any more than at sea, Mormon organisation allowed the emigrants to escape all difficulties, nor that Church policy was always smoothly successful. Year after year the emigrants embarrassed the leaders by the amount of baggage they desired to take, baggage for which, in the United States, the owners might prove unable to pay excess freight charges.³⁰ Despite the detailed instructions, moreover, the Mormon emigrants were still people unaccustomed to travel and were likely to find the journey more than a little

²⁸For British groups, see Appleton Harmon's "Journal" Part II, (typescript in library of Utah State Historical Society); "Journal of Archer Walters," *Improvement Era*, XXXIX (Salt Lake City, 1936), 483; James Linforth, *Route from Liverpool to Salt Lake Valley* (Liverpool, 1855), 17. For Continental Mormons, *Millennial Star*, XV (September 3, 1853), 587; XVII (February 3, 1855), 70-71; XXIV (June 7, 1862), 365.

²⁹Henry Mayhew, *The Mormons or Latter Day Saints*, Charles Mackay, ed., (London, 1851), 251-52; *Millennial Star*, XXIX (August 3, 1867), 495; this shows segregation in the steamship *Manhattan*.

³⁰*Ibid.*, XIV (October 2, 1852), 498; XXIV (April 26, 1862), 264-67; XXVI (March 26, 1864), 200-02; XXXI (July 17, 1869), 468. The Church itself encouraged emigrants to take many articles which might be of value to the struggling economy of Utah.

frightening. In 1855 Reuben Hedlock can be found writing to Brigham Young:

There is much to do when a vessel is preparing to sail for some days; from ten to twenty emigrants coming to the office: one wants this and one wants that, and the third wants to know where he shall sleep all night, with a dozen or more women and children in the office to run over; one wants tin ware, another is short of cash and their children are hungry.³¹

Even after much further systematising, an element of such confusion was likely to persist.

Once on board, the emigrants were organised under a president and two counsellors, and from the beginning these men were appointed by the presidency of the British Mission. Even in 1840, the first year of the emigration, Brigham Young records that "Brother Kimball and I met the brethren about to embark for America, and organised the company."³² From 1855 it seems to have been the invariable practice for the British presidency to go aboard, make the principal appointments, and deliver speeches of instruction and exhortation. Sometimes the appointments were sustained by vote.³³ Later, and often after the ship had set sail, the newly-appointed leaders divided the company into wards, each under a president.³⁴ This was done on board the *Swanton* as early as 1843, and became the rule from 1848. The ward presidents kept lists of the people in their charge, arranged for prayers, supervised conduct, and reported to a council of leaders which met daily to lay down rules and "to provide for any contingency that might arise, and to continue

³¹British Mission History (unpublished, Church Historian's Library, Salt Lake City), January 16, 1844.

³²*Millennial Star*, XXV (November 21, 1863, part of the serial History of Brigham Young), 743. The organisation was effected even in the *Neva* in 1855, carrying only 13 Mormon emigrants.

³³*Ibid.*, XIX (April 11, 1857), 233-34; XXIV (May 3, 1862), 284; XXX (July 25, 1868), 473. Of 130 ship's presidents who can be identified, 59 had been presidents of Districts or Conferences in the British Mission immediately before sailing—an analysis based on *Millennial Star* and on Andrew Jensen, *Latter Day Saints' Biographical Encyclopedia* (4 vols., Salt Lake City, 1901-1936).

³⁴*Millennial Star*, XXIII (July 27, 1861), 475, among several examples.

to arrange for order, comfort and cleanliness."³⁵ In the larger ships, organisation was quite elaborate: in 1851 the *Ellen*, with 466 Mormons on board, had twelve wards for the steerage, grouped in two larger divisions; one for the second cabin; while the priesthood was separately organised. In 1862, the *William Tapscott*, with 807 emigrants, had nineteen wards.³⁶ A guard was set up, under a captain or marshal. These men made sure that no lights were left burning at night, kept order and took charge of lost property. But above all they preserved Mormon separation if other passengers were on board, and they prevented unlawful movement by night, especially by sailors among the women. By such precautions "some that might have fallen have been preserved."³⁷

There were buglers, and there were squads for cleaning ship. In 1855 men on board the *Juventa* began cleaning at 4:00 a.m., "so as to allow the females to get up at 6."³⁸ Cooks and stewards were sometimes found among the emigrants, to be rewarded either by taking a collection for them or by refunding their passage money.³⁹

No amount of careful planning could make conditions perfect. Although ample rations were usually carried, and one ship that sailed from London can be found taking on fresh provisions from small boats off the Isle of Wight, yet food sometimes ran short. Nor could such an event be avoided as was recorded in one emigrant's diary: "as much bone as beef to-day."⁴⁰ Like

³⁵*Ibid.*, XXVII (June 24, 1865), 399. See also *ibid.*, XXVI (August 20, 1864), 540; and Linforth, *op. cit.*, 25. The president of the *Horizon* reported: "I make it my business to visit every part of the ship six or seven times a day," *Millennial Star* XVIII (June 28, 1856), 411.

³⁶*Ibid.*, XIII (May 15, 1851), 158; XXIV (May 31, 1862), 348. One cannot be sure how many Mormons travelled in the better accommodation, but the Passenger Lists (Microfilm, from National Archives, Washington, D.C.) of 33 ships give details of accommodation, and members of the ship's presidency, identifiable by name, travelled Cabin in 14 and Second Cabin in two.

³⁷*Millennial Star*, XVII (May 12, 1855), 303; XXIII (July 27, 1861), 475.

³⁸*Ibid.*, XVII (June 16, 1855), 374.

³⁹The fact that the Church Shipping Books carry these names suggests that the people applied in advance for the jobs. Seventeen ships had 12 cooks, 13 stewards and one stewardess. The collection is reported from the *Amazon*, *Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, October 4, 1863, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

⁴⁰*Journal of Archer Walters*, *loc. cit.*, 574. *Journal History*, October 4, 1863. Linforth, *op. cit.*, 20. *Millennial Star*, XVII (May 12, 1855), 301-02. A very sensible comment is the following: "It is not to be expected that several hundred emigrants huddled together in one vessel, and tossed about upon the billows of the deep, will relish the coarse food such as is usually furnished by the law."—*ibid.*, XI (January 1, 1849), 8.

all emigrants, Mormon emigrants suffered from the discomforts and dangers of heavy weather:

. . . wave lashed on wave, and storm on storm, every hour increasing; all unsecured boxes, tins, bottles, pans, etc., danced in wild confusion, cracking, clashing, jumbling, rolling, while the vessel pitched, and tossed, and bounced till people flew out of their berths on the floor, while others held on with difficulty; thus we continued for eight days—no fires made—nothing cooked—biscuits and cold water; the waves dashed down the hold into the interior of the vessel, hatchway then closed, all in utter darkness and terror, not knowing whether the vessel was sinking or not; none could tell—all prayed—an awful silence prevailed—sharks and sins presented themselves, and doubts and fears; one awful hour after another passing, we found we were not yet drowned; some took courage and lit the lamps; we met in prayer, we pleaded the promises of our God—faith prevailed; the winds abated, the sky cleared, the fires were again lit, then the luxury of a cup of tea and a little gruel. O! how ungrateful we are for our mercies, because they are so common.⁴¹

Nor could the Mormons avoid their share of accident and death. For about 41,000 of the more than 52,000 British and Continental Mormons who crossed the Atlantic up to 1870, the general mortality rate was 1.09%. By using passenger lists rather than *Millennial Star* reports, it is possible to break down the figures into age-groups for nearly 12,000 of the emigrants. It is then found that the rate for adults was 0.36%, for children 2.92%, and for infants 7.70%.⁴² A similar difference between age-groups can be seen in the Australian emigration, for which detailed figures are available. Comparisons with the total North Atlantic emigration from Britain are more difficult to make. At first sight, Mormon mortality seems much higher. Thus, omitting the cholera years, British emigration mortality ranged from 0.23%

⁴¹Letter from Ann Pitchforth to friends in the Isle of Man, *ibid.*, VIII (July 15, 1846), 12-13.

⁴²Remember that these figures would have to be multiplied by about ten to make an annual death-rate. The infant death-rate becomes about five times the very high rate for the Britain of that day, the adult rate perhaps twice.

to 0.05% for sailing ships and steamships combined, 1854-62; from 0.73% to 0.05% for sailing ships only, 1863-70; and from 0.13% to 0.04% for steamships only, 1863-70. The Mormon range for the whole period, mainly sailing ships, was 1.86% to 0.42%. Several qualifications are necessary, however. The ships carrying the other 11,000 Mormon emigrants may have had a low mortality. Some of the Mormon percentages are for such small numbers that the effects of an epidemic might be exaggerated. The Mormon emigration almost certainly contained a far higher proportion of children and old people than did the general emigration. Most important, there is every reason to believe that the published figures of mortality for British emigration as a whole are grossly understated. They were compiled mainly from reports from shipowners; and although the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners professed themselves satisfied with them, it can be said that when the official figure can be compared with the Mormon for the same ship, the former is often highly inaccurate, and almost always on the side of understatement. To sum up, it may be said that such investigation as is possible is more damaging to the general statistics than to the record of Mormon emigration; but that the organisation devised by the Church did not succeed in keeping mortality down to what the modern student would regard as a tolerable figure.⁴³

In many ways, the Mormons enjoyed better conditions than the main body of emigrants. Not only was their more thorough organisation a guarantee of that standard of cleanliness which the New York reporter observed, but it was found possible to master even the difficult problem of cooking. Until the 1850's, ordinary emigrants were left to do their own cooking at only one or two stoves. Even if bad weather did not intervene, it was likely that some would fail to get even one hot meal a day, though the stoves were in continuous use. Ship's cooks took tips from the passengers, either to cook for them or to give them preference

⁴³Mortality figures for British emigration as a whole are in the annual reports of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners for the years mentioned. Full official figures are not available for the 1840's. Contemporaries thought mortality in that decade very high, but only the worst ships attracted publicity.

at the stoves.⁴⁴ An observer in 1853, in a ship carrying Mormons and other emigrants, stated: "I do not believe that the Queen, with her Privy Council and the House of Lords and Commons put together, could have legislated successfully for it," and a later writer said that the siege of the galley was fiercer than that of Sebastopol.⁴⁵ In time, the Mormons adopted the system of securing regular volunteer cooks and of establishing a strict rotation among the wards for cooking meals.⁴⁶ This system, indeed, continued long after the law required preparation of meals by ship's cooks. On board the *Monarch of the Sea* in 1861 a meeting of the priesthood resolved: "That the English have a fire at the cooking galley to themselves, and the remaining three fires be kept for the Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and Germans."⁴⁷ The journal of the *Belle Wood*, four years later, records:

To supply the Saints with regular meals, an organisation of brethren for cooking was formed. Elders Shaw and Holt were appointed superintendents to preside alternately. . . . The Saints were notified to prepare their dishes, which were brought to and taken from the galley by brethren appointed for that purpose from each ward. The wards cooked in rotation.⁴⁸

Prayer meetings were often held daily in each ward, sacrament meetings at frequent intervals, though rough weather could interrupt either. In 1863, there took place simultaneously one Sunday a meeting on the lower deck, one on the upper, one in the second cabin, and one in the "batchelors' hall," i.e., the separate accommodation for single men.⁴⁹ On board the *Belle Wood*:

Our first Sunday meeting was held on the quarter deck, where the mate, Mr. Grayson, had prepared a sort of

⁴⁴Vere Foster's report in Parliamentary Papers 1851, XL, 436. Select Committee on Passengers' Acts, Parliamentary Papers 1851, XIX, questions 1103, 1117, 1155, 1158, 1859-61, 2686, 6181-85. Committee on Emigrant Ships, Parliamentary Papers 1854, XIII, questions 5509-11. Rebecca Burlend, *A True Picture of Emigration* (first edition 1848, reprinted edition, Milo M. Quaife, Chicago, 1936), 11. Wiley and Putnam's *Emigrants' Guide*, 54-55. *British Mechanics' and Labourers' Handbook and True Guide to the United States* (London, 1840), 38-39. Robert G. Albion, *Square-Riggers on Schedule* (Princeton, 1938), 249—an extract from an emigrant's journal of 1842.

⁴⁵Linforth, *op. cit.*, 25. *Millennial Star*, XVIII (June 28, 1856), 412.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, XII (June 15, 1850), 185; XVI (July 15, 1854), 447; XXIV (May 31, 1826), 349.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, XXIII (July 27, 1861), 475.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, XXVII (June 24, 1865), 397.

⁴⁹Journal History, October 4, 1863.

pulpit by spreading the union jack on the harness cask, and had also arranged seats for the accommodation of the Elders. The ship's bell was tolled for half an hour previous to each meeting.⁵⁰

Provision was made for those who for linguistic or other reasons might be expected to experience special difficulties. "President Woodard exhorted the English Saints [of the *Monarch of the Sea*] to patience and kindness to the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish Saints." An address by Woodard was interpreted by Elder Wilhelmsen. Separate wards were provided for the Scandinavians, and separate meetings were held for them and for the Germans and Welsh.⁵¹ Often, too, the president's counsellors were appointed from among the Continental elders.

Partly for the same reason, education was taken seriously by some Mormon companies. Not only were classes in English held for foreign emigrants, but classes for Mormons' and other passengers' children were held on board the *Olympus* in 1851; and examples can be found of lectures on geography, astronomy and agriculture, as well as discussions on more general topics.⁵²

Committees were sometimes appointed for special duties. On board the *Belle Wood*, in 1865, "The number of the aged, feeble and sick rendered it necessary to appoint some persons whose special business it should be to attend to them. Accordingly, Elder William Willes, and a Female Sanitary Committee, . . . were appointed to that important labour of love," and three men were appointed a committee "to make arrangements for social parties for the recreation of the Saints."⁵³

The *Belle Wood's* amusements included a ship's newspaper edited by Elder Sims, and a "small band, assisted by one or two good violinists, also by a flute and clarionet, made sweet mel-

⁵⁰*Millennial Star*, XXVII (June 24, 1865), 397. The report adds that the officers "maintained strictest order and decorum among the crew." This attitude was not always displayed. Writing of the *John J. Boyd*, C. R. Savage stated: "Our captain got superstitious on account of the long passage, and ordered that there should be no singing on board; the mate said, that all ships that had preachers on board were always sure of a bad passage." See *ibid.*, XVIII (March 22, 1856), 206.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, XXIII (June 27, 1861), 475-76.

⁵²*Ibid.*, XIII (June 15, 1851), 189-90; XIX (July 11, 1857), 446; XXIII (June 27, 1861), 475.

⁵³*Ibid.*, XXVII (June 24, 1865), 399. A health committee was set up on board the *S. Curling* also, *ibid.*, XVII (July 7, 1855), 423-24.

ody."⁵⁴ At its best, then, the voyage might approximate to the peace and order complacently described by John Jaques in 1856:

The crew occasionally, by way of variety, give us some of their characteristic songs, while at their work. The children make themselves happy, both above and below deck. Marbles, skipping ropes, and all the available paraphernalia of childhood's games are called into request. The older boys amuse themselves by tugging at the ropes with the sailors. So merrily we live together. We want but the stalls and ginger-bread to give our deck the appearance of an English country fair, barring the drunkenness, quarrelling, profanity and obscenity which generally characterise such assemblies.⁵⁵

Although exceptions can be found, relations with the captain were usually good. This is scarcely surprising. Mormon organisation made the work of a conscientious captain far easier, just as it helped to make the emigrants independent of one less well-disposed. Captains attended Mormon concerts, a wedding, even preaching, while in 1868 the captain of the *Constitution* invited the elders to a Fourth of July dinner.⁵⁶ The captain of the *Charles Buck* gave President Ballantyne charge of the medicine chest; the captains of the *Carnatic*, *Hudson* and *Belle Wood* sent food from their own galley for sick emigrants, while the captain of the *Kennebec* gave President Higbee a bottle of wine for a sick woman.⁵⁷ As a result, it was quite common at the end of the voyage to present a written testimonial to the captain, to which he sometimes made a formal reply.⁵⁸ Of relations with the crew there is less evidence. Some conversions are recorded: in 1853 the captain, two mates, and eighteen sailors of the *International* were baptised. But a Mormon writing to England a year later advised caution in dealing with such manifestations, since, he alleged, sailors had been known to be baptised "merely

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, XXVII (June 24, 1865), 399. See also, for a band, Journal of Archer Walters, *loc. cit.*, 484, 545.

⁵⁵*Millennial Star*, XVIII (June 28, 1856), 413.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, XVII (June 16, 1855), 374; XXV (August 29, 1863), 556; XXIX (July 27, 1867), 474; XXX (September 5, 1868), 572.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, X (July 1, 1848), 203; XVII (May 12, 1855), 301; XXVI (August 20, 1864), 540; XXVII (June 24, 1865), 398. British Mission History, January 10, 1852.

⁵⁸*Millennial Star*, XI (June 15, 1849), 186; XVIII (June 7, 1856), 355. There are many other examples.

to assist them in designs against the honour of our sisters."⁵⁹

Like other emigrants, the Mormons changed to steamships in the later 1860's. Apart from very small companies, agents or missionaries, the first example was in 1867, and in the next year the *Constitution* was the last sailing ship to be used. From the beginning all the steamships were of the Guion Line, and this connection seems to have been maintained until that line disappeared in 1894.⁶⁰ Like other emigrants, too, the Mormons speedily became conscious of the improvement in conditions which resulted.⁶¹

At New Orleans, Boston, Philadelphia or, invariably from 1859, New York, the voyage ended:

Within the last half hour there has been a terrific commotion in consequence of the appearance in prospect of the pilot boat. "The pilot! the pilot!" was cried abroad, and the cry was taken up between decks, followed by a tumultuous rush up the hatchway, and folks lined the bulwarks immediately, to await the pilot's arrival. Dinners were abandoned for the time, and a general holiday all over the ship appeared to be in full enjoyment, the excitement being intense.⁶²

A guard was mounted on the baggage. Meat, flour and sugar were served out to help the poorer emigrants of the *Amazon* on their rail journey across the United States. Advice was given as to procedure on landing, "and no blessing to any that disregarded that council [sic]."⁶³ Such precautions may have sufficed to protect the emigrants from exploitation at a port where, in 1842, Brigham Young had said the runners were like so many pirates. Like other emigrants the Mormons found the medical inspection perfunctory. The doctor took "about fifteen minutes" over his inspection of the *Enoch Train*, which carried 534 Mor-

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, XV (June 4, 1853), 358; XVI (July 15, 1854), 477.

⁶⁰Jenson, *op. cit.*, I, 170. Frank C. Bowen, *A Century of Atlantic Travel* (London, 1932), 108, 111, 175, 209. The ownership of vessels identified as carrying Mormon emigrants can be traced in the Liverpool Customs Bills of Entry, printed chronologically and bound annually, in the Picton Library, Liverpool.

⁶¹*Millennial Star*, XXXI (September 18, 1869), 610.

⁶²*Ibid.*, XXVI (July 23, 1864), 478.

⁶³Journal of Archer Walters, *loc. cit.*, 574. *Journal History*, October 4, 1863. *Millennial Star*, XXIII (July 27, 1861), 476.

mons.⁶⁴ Doubtless, however, they worried little about that, for it was the journey into the American interior which filled their minds.

It remains to examine how far this Mormon system was specifically designed to remedy existing defects of shipboard organisation on the North Atlantic, and how far it was based on a study of conditions and contemporary methods. It seems fair to say that no very detailed evidence of such study is needed. The Mormon leaders were at Liverpool, in the midst of the world's largest migration traffic. Not only was such a newspaper as the *Liverpool Mercury* full of emigration news, including reports of court proceedings, but there existed, at London and elsewhere, a considerable specialist press, dealing exclusively with emigration problems. Such papers as the *Colonial Magazine and East India Review*, the *Colonial Gazette*, the *Emigration Record and Colonial Journal* and, best of all, the short-lived *Sidney's Emigrants' Journal*, were readily available to anyone interested in the subject. So, too, were the *Colonisation Circulars*, published irregularly but frequently by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners.⁶⁵ In 1849, however, Orson Spencer wrote to Orson Pratt: "The system by which the British emigrants to Australia are conducted is the best I have yet seen. I should like to see a revision of that system by your fruitful mind."⁶⁶ The implication is clear that some study had been made of contemporary systems. It is rather less clear that this date can be said to have inaugurated any radical change in Mormon practice—though it roughly corresponded to some considerable elaboration—or that such study was the single cause of the system which came to prevail. Other factors may have been important. The number of Mormon emigrants became far larger from about 1848, and a more complex system would have been appropriate. The leadership of the British Mission was of far higher quality than in the days of Reuben Hedlock. The entire Church had just found a new stability under Brigham Young in Utah after the conflicts and disasters at Nauvoo. All these developments might have been expected to produce new standards in the organi-

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, XVIII (June 7, 1856), 355.

⁶⁵These rare publications were all consulted in the British Museum, London.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, IX (June 15, 1849), 183.

sation of the emigration movement.

Whatever the exact balance of these several factors, it is certain that the Mormons enjoyed great advantages in their search for improved methods. Their Church structure and the management of emigration were permanent, so that experience could be handed down from year to year. Apart from personal contacts and such letters as may not have survived, the files of *Millennial Star* constitute a veritable encyclopedia of Mormon emigration practice. Moreover, we know that very detailed information on conditions at the ports, and even on individual ships and the character of captains, was included in the reports submitted by ship's presidents, or by agents in the United States, to Liverpool or Salt Lake City.⁶⁷ To sum up, under such a permanent organisation sound methods could become standard rather than exceptional.

The Mormon emigration was not, however, only another system of organisation among others. By those who took part, it was regarded as a religious "mission." Utah was not just an area of the United States suitable for colonisation, an area to be developed by the hit-or-miss methods of the contemporary Far West. It was "Zion," the true home of all converts to the new Gospel. It was to be built up by the meticulous planning of an inspired Church leadership to be a perfect society, acceptable as the headquarters of the millennial rule. As such, it was to Utah that converts should "gather," and "gathering," so prominent in Mormon writing, could fairly be called a doctrine.

This conception affected both the rank-and-file and the leaders of the migration. Discipline in the ship's companies was of course not perfect. The report on the *Swanton* in 1843 says: "Some have been disposed to murmur," though the report goes on, "yet those spirits have been subdued by the authority of the holy priesthood."⁶⁸ Still, the Mormon emigrants were likely to display a certain singleness of purpose, with far more patience, and far more willingness to submit to authority, than those who, as individuals, went to the United States from motives of economic betterment. Their leaders had a double duty. They had indeed to ensure the health and safety of those in their charge.

⁶⁷Favorable reports have already been cited. Severe criticism is in *ibid.*, XI (February 15, 1849), 54; XII (July 15, 1850), 217.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, IV (May, 1843), 15.

They had also to keep them, all the way from their homes to their final settlement in the valleys of Utah, loyal to the purposes of the Church. But they had also a double authority. They were not overseers elected from among their own number by the emigrants, or appointed by a well-meaning captain. They were not even appointed, like the surgeon-superintendents on the Australian ships, by some agency of a secular government. Rather they were organisers appointed by the Church. They were priests, often eminent in the hierarchy. They were engaged in a "mission" of the highest spiritual as well as worldly importance.

When this is understood, many of the details of the Mormon organisation on shipboard become clearer. A Mormon emigrant company was in fact organised as a branch of the Church, exactly equivalent to a Conference on land. There were the same religious services, the same minute supervision of daily life by officers, even the same ceremonies of "sustaining" the authorities of the Church throughout the world.

In examining Mormon claims to superiority, most of our evidence has come from Church sources. Some of these, like the Jaques article cited earlier, were no doubt intended to encourage emigration by converts still in Britain. But mistakes were admitted, and no attempt was made to conceal the high mortality figures. In other words, many of the records have the objectivity of working administrative documents. Remembering, too, the positive evidence of the New York witnesses, and what hostile critics tried to do to every other aspect of Mormon belief and organisation, it is perhaps permissible to conclude that the emigration system on board ship was pretty much beyond reproach. The Mormon system supplemented admirably the official framework of protective laws, and this was especially true of the Atlantic crossing itself. While this was to a degree intentional, being based on a study of contemporary emigration conditions, this is only a part of the truth. Much of the Mormon system was simply the extension, into one more area of activity, of that meticulous thoroughness which the Church tried to bring to its daily life, whether it was the organisation of a Mission in a new country, the building up of a new settlement in Utah, or the working out of methods of guaranteeing emigrants' welfare on the high seas.