5-2017

The Politics of Proselytizing: Europe After 1848 and the Development of Mormon Pre-Millennialism

Jacob G. Bury
Utah State University

"The Politics of Proselytizing: Europe after 1848

and the Development of Mormon Pre-Millennialism"

Jacob G. Bury

In the second year of his reign as King of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, Nebuchadnezzar II dreamt of a large stone that rolled down the side of a mountain, shattered a great metallic statue, and grew into a mountain range large enough to cover the earth. The accomplished ruler, who went on to oversee the construction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, as well as the destruction of Jerusalem's Jewish temple, was no revelator, and so enlisted Daniel, an exiled Jew, to interpret his dream. According to Daniel, the statue, divided into five parts from head to toe, portrayed mankind's present and future kingdoms. The last, represented by the statue's iron and clay feet, would be "a divided kingdom." Unable to unify, "the kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. . . . [T]he people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay."[1] Once all five kingdoms had matured and fallen, God's kingdom, the large, rolling stone, would destroy all vestiges of temporal rule and establish governance over the earth until the end of time. To the Old Testament king, Daniel's interpretation meant little; to future religious groups, and especially for members of the early Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Nebuchadnezzar's dream served as a clear roadmap to the millennium.

In the mid-1840s, twenty-four hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar's dream and many centuries removed from the statue's intermittent kingdoms—Persian, Greek and Roman—a series of revolutions swept across the divided regions of Western Europe. Ideologically descended from the French Revolution, "they occurred," as historian Eric Hobsbawn explains, "because the political systems reimposed on Europe were profoundly. . . inadequate. . . . [E]conomic and social discontents were so acute as to make a series of outbreaks virtually inevitable."[2] To the mostly conservative ruling elites, this movement was a warning of

---

[1] 2 Daniel 2: 41–3.

[2] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (New York, 1962), 112.

democracy's rising threat. To many revolutionaries, it augured the demise of old, absolutist kingdoms. To Mormon observers, like Orson Pratt, the signs of the times held implications that stretched far beyond this world and its temporal revolutions. "All the European kingdoms," he exclaimed, "are the feet and toes of the great image shown to the king of Babylon." Using the same imagery, Orson's brother, Parley P. Pratt, warned that Europe's "toes" were "on the eve of REVOLUTION. . . more important in its consequences, than any which man has yet witnessed upon the earth."[3] Revolution would unify the divided peoples of Europe and topple their governments, but only to facilitate the movement's true post-millennial purpose: to freely spread the Mormon gospel and usher in God's everlasting kingdom on earth.

Global revolution, however, did not occur. The European revolutions of the late 1840s are remembered today for their failure to affect liberal change, instead empowering decades of conservative counter-revolutionary measures and the strengthening of old-world governments in Prussia, the German States, France, and Italy—the same regions into which the Mormons had sought to expand. Writing in 1854, after a series of particularly unsuccessful missionary attempts, Orson Spencer articulated these shifting currents well. "Europe is not now what it was only a year or two since. The bias and wane of Democracy which existed a few years since, is now making an accelerated retrograde movement back to the most rigid despotism."[4] The toes from Nebuchadnezzar's dream now appeared less brittle, their clay features guarded behind the last remnants of Babylon's iron kingdoms.

---

[3] Parley Pratt, *A Letter to the Queen, Touching the Signs of the Times, and the Political Destiny of the World* (Manchester, EL, 1841), 2.

[4] Orson Spencer, *The Prussian Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Report of Elder Orson Spencer, A.B., to President Brigham Young* (Liverpool, 1853), 13.

This thesis will argue that largely in response to perceived developments in Europe, and no doubt reinforced by missionaries' regular persecution there, the early Mormon church's theological outlook in Europe shifted from a post-millennial to a decidedly pre-millennial worldview between 1848 and 1855. In this period, the church's doctrine of the gathering, which encouraged immigrating to and building up one central location from which to await the millennium, became absolute, as did their collective certainty that world governments would destroy one another before Christ's return. In addition to the initial optimism surrounding the 1848 revolutions, the Saints' early success in religiously tolerant regions of Britain had helped to furnish the idea that their message would spread throughout the world. However, in the proceeding era of counter revolution in the 1850s, when many missionaries in Prussia, Denmark, Italy, and France wrote more often about government persecution than successful proselytizing, a global Zion seemed increasingly unobtainable. Nowhere is this shift more clearly illustrated than in the church's own international newspaper, the *Millennial Star*, which in 1854 announced that "the grim demon of war" was "gaining possession of people through the earth." Instead of spreading the gospel throughout a free and amenable world, the concept that Joseph Smith Jr. originally borrowed from the Book of Isaiah as "enlarg[ing] the place of thy tent" and "stretch[ing] forth the curtains of thine habitations," the church's goal became to form a "nucleus around which everything will gather that is worth saving from the universal wreck of nations."[5]

No figure played a more representative role in this shift than Orson Spencer, who served as editor of the *Star* and president of the church's most successful European mission in Britain in the late 1840s. His experiences overseas demonstrate the difficulties the church faced as

---

[5] All issues of the *Millennial Star* (Liverpool, EL) from 1840 to 1900 are available through the Brigham Young University Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections: http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/search/collection/MStar. "Awake! O Israel," 10 February 1854 and "The World's Degeneracy," 29 September 1854, both *Millennial Star*; Isaiah 54:2; and Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (Salt Lake City, 2005), 175–7.

missionaries attempted to spread their message to the European continent among less religiously

tolerant nations after 1848. The clearest example was Spencer's brief and ill-fated mission to

Prussia in 1853, which lasted less than a week, drew the attention of Prussia's Minister of Public

Worship, V. Raumer, and initiated a twenty-year ban on all Mormon missionary activity in the

country.[6]

Experiences like Spencer's were common in the early 1850s and fit within the church's

developing belief that repressive governments, not a liberal European revolution, would bring

about the millennium. This was a classic pre-millennial understanding of the end times: the

world would not be saved until it had fallen. The gospel message would reach a select few while

the rest perished in apocalyptic conflict. By the Crimean War (1853–56), which pitted British,

French, and Ottoman forces against the expanding Russian Empire, the signs of the times were

clear to Mormon interpreters: "War and pestilence [were] performing their mission," driving the

world toward perpetual conflict "until she sinks under the influence of her own inward corrupt

festering."[7] The revolutions aimed at toppling European governments had actually made them

stronger and ultimately more hostile to the Mormon message. Missionaries and their leaders,

who considered these governments illegitimate, were nevertheless obliged to comply with their

restrictive religious policies. In short, Mormonism, a religion intended to help establish Europe's

new order and unite the world, became embroiled in Europe's old-world politics, and emerged a

more parochial, pre-millennial institution.

Thanks largely to England's magnified place within Mormon narratives overseas, the

historiography of missionary activity in nineteenth-century Europe, and specifically the effects

---

[6] Orson Spencer, *The Prussian Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Report of Elder Orson Spencer, A.B., to President Brigham Young* (Liverpool, 1853).

[7] "Review of the Past Year," 30 December 1854 and "The Russo-Turkish War and its Responsibilities," 10 June 1854, both *Millennial Star*.

this activity had on the church's development, is uneven and incomplete. Reid L. Neilson, current manager of the Church History Library, along with Brigham Young University (BYU) professor Fred E. Woods, recently co-edited an all-encompassing, multi-author volume entitled *Go Ye into All the World: The Growth and Development of Mormon Missionary Work* (2013). According to the index, there are approximately twenty pages dedicated to the British Mission; for Germany, France, Denmark, Italy, and Switzerland—all countries with Mormon temples and extensive mission histories of their own—there are none. Bruce Van Orden's book, *Building Zion: The Latter-day Saints in Europe* (1996), does mention early "risky" missionary efforts in Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, but with little analysis. He states that the continent's "political, religious, language, and cultural barriers seemed almost insurmountable," without discussing the effects these barriers may have had on the early church and its missionary program.[8]

Given the church's relative success in England, this imbalance with the church's other European missions is at least partially warranted. For a thorough history and compelling answer as to why Mormonism took off in certain parts of England, there are many great works, including Thomas Alexander's book *Manchester Mormons* (1974), James B. Allen's *Men with a Mission* (1992), and "The Religious Heritage of the British Northwest," (2008) by Stephen J. Fleming. Examining England's diverse economic and religious landscape, scholars have identified the industrial sectors where the Mormon message was most effective, as well as the past confessional tendencies of Mormonism's early converts.[9]

---

[8] Bruce A. Van Orden, *Building Zion: The Latter-day Saints in Europe* (Salt Lake City, 1996), 68–9.

[9] Thomas Alexander and James B. Allen, eds., *Manchester Mormons: The Journal of William Clayton, 1840 to 1842* (Salt Lake City, 1974); James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City, 1992); and Stephen J. Fleming, "The Religious Heritage of the British Northwest and the Rise of Mormonism," *Church History* 77 (March 2008): 73–104. See also, Polly Aird, "Why Did the Scots Convert?," *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 1 (2000): 91–122 and Ronald E. Bartholomew, "The Patterns of Missionary Work and Emigration in Nineteenth Century Buckinghamshire, England," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 1 (Spring 2008): 99–136.

While these works provide excellent case studies within England, they generally fail to consider the English experience as one piece within the church's larger European project. As a result, Mormon historians often use the British Mission as the church's normative model in Europe, instead of being viewed more appropriately as an exception to the slower, less tidy developments in other countries. Neilson argues that the "entrenched pattern of evangelism" in Christian England "hampered LDS missionary efforts in non-Christian, non-Western nations," but he seems to ignore the many Christian nations (both Catholic and Protestant) where Mormonism failed to take hold.[10]

Next to England, no other country has a comparable body of scholarship. There are a number of books set in Prussia or Germany, where missionaries faced the most resistance in the mid-nineteenth century, but their sights are focused predominantly on Mormon interactions with Nazism and eastern Communism in the twentieth century. Works like David Conley Nelson's *Moroni and the Swastika* (2015) and Raymond Kuehne's *Mormons as Citizens of a Communist State* (2010) do include background information about the church's nineteenth-century presence, but only as a stepping-stone to their focus on the world wars and beyond.[11]

Gilbert Scharffs was first to write a holistic history of German Mormonism. His book, *Mormonism in Germany* (1970), though full of helpful mission statistics, emigrant profiles, and primary documents, incorporates few secondary sources and virtually no commentary on German society, politics, or the broader European mission field. Unfortunately, Kurt Widmer's book, *Unter Zion's Panier* (2013), meant to revise and enhance Scharff's work, suffers from

---

[10] Reid L. Neilson and Fred E. Woods, eds., *Go Ye into All the World: The Growth & Development of Mormon Missionary Work* (Salt Lake City, 2012), 65.

[11] David Conley Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika: Mormons in Nazi Germany* (Norman, 2015) and Raymnd Kuehne, *Mormons as Citiznes of a Communist State of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in East Germany, 1945–1990* (Salt Lake City, 2010).

many of the same issues. He treats German missionary history as if it were locked in a vacuum, neglecting the link between social and political changes within Germany and broader European trends.[12]

Widmer is right to point out, for example, that Germany's expanding bureaucracy in the 1840s and 1850s allowed for greater access to public education throughout the country. He uses this point to help contemplate Germany's particular resistance to Mormon missionaries. Because, he posits, "uneducated classes were often the first to fall victim to the Mormon missionaries . . . it may be that the German educational system served as a counter balance to the Mormon message."[13] Although Germany's growing state-run education system did increase literacy rates, and certainly did more than lay "a thin veneer of civility on the brutish masses," as Friedrich Nietzsche once suggested, this upward trend was not unique by western European standards at the time. Access to public education grew throughout the continent in the mid-nineteenth century, while the uneducated "masses" that Nietzsche described, and conservative governments feared, continued to endure throughout Germany, England, France, and elsewhere. If illiteracy had been a gateway to conversion, missionaries would have found no shortage of potential members in Germany.[14]

Two works stand out as examples of Mormon scholarship fully vested in, and carefully mindful of, their narrative's European contexts. In his article, "War and Confusion in Babylon" (2011), Zachary R. Jones describes Mormon reactions to German unification from 1864 to 1880 by first detailing the movement's historical significance. Drawing from a large body of

---

[12] Gilbert Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany* (Salt Lake City, 1970) and Kurt Widmer, *Unter Zions Panier: Mormonism and it Interaction with Germany and its People 1840–1990* (Berlin, 2013), 134.

[13] Ibid., 241.

[14] Quoted in David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (New York, 1998), 304.

secondary sources, Jones shows how unification developed slowly, often unfavorably, and came only after a series of costly, drawn-out Prussian wars. Some factions, including the Austrian government and smaller German states in the south, hoped that unification would fail in order to limit Prussia's growing role in European affairs. Mormon observers were torn. The church's European newspaper, the *Millennial Star*, was filled with negative articles about Babylon's rising influence. Yet, at the same time, "great wars served as harbingers of Christ's second coming." The paper's editor, Orson Pratt, urged European Mormons to "flee to Zion" where they could safely watch as man's few remaining kingdoms destroyed each other.[15]

Just two decades earlier, the church reacted very differently to far-reaching political events in Europe. Looking favorably on the 1848 Revolution, mission president Orson Spencer commented, "the effort of the industrial classes to overthrow the sway of iron despotism, seems to be almost simultaneous throughout every nation in Europe."[16] Craig Livingston documents this period of intense optimism in the church's religious affairs overseas. Mormon leaders believed that toppling absolutist monarchies would lead inevitably to the development of large republican governments, religious toleration throughout Europe, and eventually world unification leading up to Christ's return. Livingston's analysis is incredibly broad, but his work still serves as an excellent link between European and Mormon history. That gap between context and confession has long been bridged in the U.S., with books like Kathleen Flake's *The Politics of American Religious Identity* (2004) and Sarah Gordon's *The Mormon Question*

---

[15] Zachary R. Jones, "'War and Confusion in Babylon': Mormon Reaction to German Unification, 1864–80," *Journal of Mormon History* 37 (Fall 2011): 115. The Journal of Mormon History began to separate their publications by seasons starting in 2005. For earlier publications, I will include the issue number, followed by the volume year in parentheses.

[16] Quoted in Craig Livingston, "Eyes on 'the Whole European World': Mormon Observers of the 1848 Revolutions," *Journal of Mormon History* 31 (Fall 2005): 103.

(2002). These works have no trouble placing Mormon Studies within complex, dynamic American settings; similar treatment on the European stage is long overdue.[17]

When Orson Spencer first arrived in Berlin on 25 January 1853, he was "immediately surrounded with a moveable fence or paling, and guarded by soldiers armed with guns and bayonets." Spencer, the former president of the LDS British Mission (1847–48), along with his companion, Jacob Houtz, was on an assignment to obtain free passage throughout Prussia as part of the Mormon church's expanding missionary efforts on the European continent. The two men had come to Berlin seeking an audience with the Prussian King, William IV, who they understood to be both tolerant of and interested in the growing Mormon faith. Five days earlier in Hamburg, the American Consul, Samuel Bromberg—by then a veteran of mediating Mormon affairs in northern Germany—attempted to restrain Spencer's optimism. "Prussia," he warned, "will not treat you as the Syndic of Hamburg. . . . [T]heir course will be prompt and energetic, probably setting you out of their kingdom *immediately*." While barricaded at the Berlin railway, the police confiscated Spencer and Houtz's passports and advised the two missionaries to find lodging until they were called upon.[18] They would not wait long. Their next encounter with the Prussian authorities took place in court, where the course of Mormon missionary efforts would permanently change.

Before Spencer's trip to Prussia, his experiences in Europe had been mostly limited to, and shaped by, his time in Northwest England, where the church enjoyed its greatest level of success internationally. By 1904, the church claimed 30,000 members in the British Isles and had

---

[17] Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill, 2004) and Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, 2002).
[18] Spencer, *Prussian Mission*, 2–4.

since 1837 helped over 55,000 converted Saints emigrate. In his two-year service as mission

president from 1847–48, Spencer oversaw the fastest growth rate in Britain in the nineteenth

century, with nearly 8,000 annual converts. The 1848 issue of the *Millennial Star* includes

British missionary letters to the editor all echoing the same general sentiment: "The work. . .

continue[d] to roll on" in Sheffield, was "still rolling on" in Edinburgh, "progressed. . . rapidly"

in Edinburgh, and "prospects" in Sheffiled "[were] cheering for the coming season." With

continued success in Britain from 1837 onward, the church's international population actually

rivaled its North American membership rolls by 1850.[19]

Spencer's experience in the late 1840s squared nicely with the church's broader

interpretation of European affairs and their implications. The Revolutions of 1848 created an

environment of post-millennial optimism embraced by the Pratt brothers, Parley and Orson,

apostles Wilford Woodruff and John Taylor, and Spencer himself, based on a shared global

vision that through popular uprising, "man. . . might destroy religious, social, and political

monopolies." The clearest outgrowth of these "monopolies" for Mormon missionaries was the

barrier of state-sanctioned religious intolerance. Governments devoid of "Republican values"

could severely limit Mormon progress by imposing restrictions, or even outright bans, on foreign

religions. Unlike Britain, most continental powers did limit public and private expressions of

faith, which made the revolutions, and thus Europe's lower classes, chief actors in the roadmap

to the millennium. The 1848 and 1849 issues of the *Millennial Star* were filled with articles

predicting the end result of these revolutions when, as Orson Pratt believed, "man himself might

---

[19] Livingston, "Eyes on 'the Whole European World,'" 101; Fleming, "Religious Heritage of the British Northwest," 85–104; Malcolm R. Thorp, "Popular Mormon Millennialism in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of Mormon History 31* (Spring 2005): 95–100; and W. E. Mitchell, William Gibson, Dan Jones, and Crandell Dunn, "Letters to the Editor," *Millennial Star*, 8 April 1848.

provide the genesis of world unification."[20] Spencer summarized this plan in an 1848 editorial,

saying,

> The effort of the industrial classes to overthrow the sway of iron despotism, seems to be almost simultaneous throughout every nation of Europe. . . . This spirit of sympathy for the labouring people, spreading among so many nations with electric speed, is surely ominous that the hand of the Might God of Jaocb is at work in turning and over-turning, until He, whose right it is to reign, shall come and reign on the earth.[21]

With popular, working-class uprisings acting as a catalyst for liberalization across Europe,

the church believed its gospel message would spread throughout the continent and on to all

nations, thus ensuring a peaceful millennium.

Along with their message of global unification in the 1840s, the church did not yet have a

centralized Zion or a definitive gathering doctrine. Joseph Smith Jr. marked several locations as

"Zion" throughout his lifetime, most notably in Jackson County, Missouri. However, a revelation

in April 1832 instilled the idea of an expansive Zion: "Zion must increase in beauty, and in

holiness: her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened." Historian Richard

Lyman Bushman argues that this revelation was the first to introduce "stakes of Zion" and that it

effectively turned the gathering into an "elastic concept." Shortly before Smith's death, he

reiterated that Zion would exist where the residents "are pure in heart." Before 1850, the

Millennial Star said very little about a physical Zion, although the editors were always quick to

identify areas they considered "Babylonish." The Perpetual Emigration Fund, set up by church

---

[20] Orson Pratt, "Building the Temple at Jerusalem," *Millennial Star*, 1 March 1849 and John Taylor, *The Government of God* (Liverpool, EL, 1852). For an example of how the economic message of the 1848 revolutions paired with the church's, see Orson Pratt, *New Jerusalem and Equality and Oneness of the Saints: A Forecast of Events to be Established by a Chosen and Dedicated People* (Liverpool, EL, 1849). For example of the church's post-millennial stance prior to the 1848 revolutions, see Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People. . .* (New York, 1837); Pratt, Parley. *A Letter to the Queen, Touching the Signs of the Times, and the Political Destiny of the World*. Manchester, EL, 1841; and John Taylor, "To the archbishops, the bishops and clergy of the Church of England, circa 1840," MS 4361, Taylor, John 1808–1887, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

[21] Orson Spencer, "Editorial," *Millennial Star*, 8 April 1848.

leaders to help fund immigrant voyages to the United States in 1849, was part of this millennial "gathering" to Zion theology, but this was, from the outset, a limited and specialized service. The church favored British converts with technical skills and good standing within the church, members they referred to specifically as "mechanics." It was not logistically possible, and did not square with the church's early concept of the millennium, to gather all of the Saints in one central location. Global unification and conversion, the post-millennial dream of the late 1840s, required a decentralized, adaptable, or "elastic" Zion.[22] It was with this mentality that the church initially moved out from Britain into Italy, France, the German States, and Switzerland. However, by 1853, when Spencer and Houtz set off for Prussia, affairs on the continent had shifted, as had the church's millennial outlook.

The religious and political landscape in Prussia was unlike anything Spencer had experienced as a missionary in England. On Spencer's first full day in Berlin, he visited the American Embassy to inquire about the legality of his trip—an issue that had started to impede missionary work elsewhere on the continent by the early 1850s. He spoke with the secretary of the American Legation, "Mr. Fay," and asked how best to meet with the Prussian king directly, and also "what toleration or religious restrictions existed among [the Prussians]." Fay left briefly and returned with a series of questions about the Mormon faith. He asked whether Spencer's church rejected the Christian faith, what sort of polygamous laws they instituted, and in what

---

[22] Joseph Smith Jr., *Doctrine and Covenants* [1832] 82:14 (Salt Lake City, 1964); Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 176; Joseph Smith Jr., 1844, quoted in B. H. Roberts, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1930), 402; "The Russo-Turkish War"; and "General Conference, starting 1 November 1850 in Manchester, England in the Carpenter's Hall- 5 and 6 October," *Millennial Star*, 15 November 1850. Mormon scholars have traditionally argued that the Gathering doctrine was a literal collection of all Saints from its inception in the 1830s up until the early 1860s. For examples, see David M. Morris, "The Rhetoric of the Gathering and Zion: Consistency through Change, 1831–1930," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 1 (Spring 2008): 154–62; Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of the Early Mormonism* (Urbana, 1993); and William Mulder, "Mormonism's 'Gathering'': An American Doctrine with a Difference," *Church History* 23 (September 1954): 248–56.

scriptures they based their beliefs. After this round of questioning, a second official, "Mr.

Barnard," appeared and explained to Spencer that he stood no chance of being welcomed in

Prussia. The government enforced a strict definition of Protestant Christianity, known as the

Evangelical Lutheran Church, and granted only limited "tolerance" to Jews and Catholics.

Groups operating outside of this sanctioned fold, he warned, would face certain expulsion.[23]

Barnard went on to explain that the Revolution of 1848, meant to ease social restrictions

in Prussia, had had the opposite effect. By presenting "the shadow of a constitution," William IV

appeased revolutionaries while simultaneously consolidating his base of power. As Spencer

concluded after his time at the embassy, "the King's little finger in the year 1853 is thicker than

his thumb was previous to 1848" and "this retrograde tendency to absolutism is supposed to be

universally prevalent on the whole continent of Europe."[24]

While the immediate effects and lasting legacy of the 1848 European revolutions remain

contested to this day, it is significant that already by 1853 Spencer cited revolutionary failure in

Prussia to contextualize and rationalize his own religious mission.[25] In this same year, LDS

Church President Brigham Young announced Zion's official, physical location: "It is at the City

of the Great Salt Lake, in the Valleys of the Mountains; in the settlement of Utah Territory-there

is Zion now." The *Millennial Star* began to publish biannual statistical reports and ship records

documenting the total number of European immigrants to Utah, and articles appeared

encouraging missionaries to promote emigration. Outside of England, the Saints' only sanctuary

---

[23] Spencer, *Prussian Mission*, 3, 4–5.

[24] Ibid., 5.

[25] For more on the historiography of the 1848 Revolution as it relates to Prussia and the German States, see David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (New York, 1984); James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1995); David Blackbourn, *Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (New York, 1997), 135–75; and Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 450–522.

was "under the Constitution of the United States." Unlike the restrictive laws that had grown stronger throughout Europe, "this Constitution [was] liberal and God-like" and "recognize[d] no law superior to a man's religious faith."[26]

Even newspapers in Berlin, aware of the Mormons' pivot toward emigration and Spencer's presence in the city, published articles about the church's intention to grow an anti-Christian, polygamous state in western North America made up of disaffected Europeans. Spencer resented this categorization, blaming Prussia's counter-revolutionary government for concealing the truth from its citizens—citizens who just a few years earlier were intent on overthrowing their absolutist king. This religious animosity, however, what Spencer attributed in his writings to the failed 1848 revolution, actually had more to do with Prussia's longstanding relationship between Church and State.[27]

The state-sanctioned, exclusionary Evangelical Lutheran Church in Prussia that Barnard warned would reject Spencer and his Mormon message came about in the direct aftermath of the French Revolution. From 1805 until 1815, the French, with their more mobile, professional army, occupied lands on Prussia's western border. They built up French satellite states in Westphalia and the Rhineland, creating both a zone of enlightenment influence and a pipeline to extract Prussian goods and able-bodied soldiers. During their brief occupation, they managed to overthrow the existing princes, end seigneurialism, introduce religious toleration, and secularize church lands. In 1815 at the Congress of Vienna, the German Confederation replaced the old Holy Roman Empire, loosely consolidating German states and ousting the French from the west. At the same time, German lands underwent a spiritual revival known as the Pietist Movement,

---

[26] Brigham Young, "Faithfulness and Apostasy," 5 June 1853, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2: 253, http://jod.mrm.org/2/248 and "The Kingdom of God—Revelation and Restitution," *Millennial Star*, 1 January 1853.
[27] Spencer, *Prussian Mission*, 5–8.

which was in part a rejection of secular enlightenment ideals, but also an embrace of the looser confessional boundaries that the French had introduced. Pietism gained popularity throughout German Lutheran churches as a more individualistic, enthusiastic alternative to orthodox Protestantism and spawned numerous revivals in the early nineteenth century. [28]

Historian Christopher Clark argues that unlike early bottom-up Awakenings in the United States, landed aristocrats guided spiritual revival in Germany as a way to maintain their spheres of influence in a changing society. These so-called "estate-based pietests" saw themselves as a check against monarchial abuse and a safeguard against popular republicanism, keeping the peasantry within traditional power structures while offering new modes of religious expression. Aristocratic concern over the *Soziale Frage* (Social Question) exploded in Germany as governments sought to abolish feudal rights and as industrialization funneled more and more peasants into cities. Among the nobility, historian Hermann Beck argues, a new form of literature emerged called *Pauperismusliteratur* (literature concerned with the peasantry). He identifies 42 relevant book titles from 1816 to 1830, 55 from 1831 to1840, and 231 from 1840 to1850 at the height of popular uprisings throughout Germany. Local pietism was a popular topic by the 1820s, and conformed to the noble concept of "*ganzes Haus*": "the ideal of the noble estate on which a close-knit community of mutual obligation could co-exist harmoniously with social hierarchy."[29]

---

[28] Blackbourn, *Long Nineteenth Century*, 91–137; Christopher Clark, *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia, 1728–1941* (New York, 1995), 86–92; and Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, 1990), 12–35.

[29] Christopher Clark, "The Politics of Revival: Pietists, Aristocrats, and the State Church in Early Nineteenth-Century Prussia," in *Between Reform, Reaction, and Resistance: Studies in the History of German Conservatism from 1789 to 1945*, ed. Larry Eugene Jones and James N. Retallack (Providence, RI, 1993), 46, 46–54; Hermann Beck, "Conservatives and the Social Question in Nineteenth-Century Prussia," in Jones and Retallack, *Between Reform*, 62–5; and Robert M. Berdahl, *The Politics of the Prussian Nobility* (Princeton, 1988), 249–50.

Meanwhile, the Prussian state under Frederick William III created the Prussian Union of churches in 1817, a series of decrees that united both Lutheran and Reformed denominations in Prussia. Meant to coincide with the 300th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, William III hoped that a unified state religion would foster social stability and a greater sense of Prussian identity among the state's Calvinist minority. "If every mindless priest," he argued, "wants to come to market with his unwashed ideas, wants to model and change what Luther and Melanchthon built up and ordered, what will—or can—come of it? . . . The right law for the Church is its harmony, its internal agreement, its community. That is what makes the Church a true Church." In 1821, the king introduced a streamlined liturgy for the Union churches, known as the New Church Agenda. By 1825, 5,343 out of 7,782 Protestant congregations had adopted it.[30] This cohesion, however, came with a price.

The Prussian Union had its fair share of detractors. What William III viewed as a unifying force, noble pietists like Leopold von Gerlach considered a form of "administrative despotism." By the mid-1820s, pietists had formed their own Protestant groups, such as the Berlin Missionary Society, the Prussian Central Bible Society, and the Society of Protestant Missions, intent on ignoring new liturgical standards and remaining outside of the Union's fold. In addition to their concern for the poor, these groups developed missionary components aimed at converting Prussia's Jewish population, and eventually Christians as well. Of course, new converts did not enter into one of the state's Union churches, but instead a particular brand of local pietism. As Clark argues, proselytizing and urging the faithful to avoid state-sanctioned

---

[30] R. M. Bigger, *The Politics of German Protestantism: The Rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia, 1815–1848* (Berkeley, 1972), 37–50; Clark, *Politics of Conversion*, 215; and J. E. Groh, *Nineteenth-Century German Protestantism: The Church as Social Model* (Washington, DC, 1982), 30–2. See also, Stan Michael Landry, "That *All* May Be One? Church Unity, Luther Memory, and Ideas of the German Nation, 1817–1883" (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2010).

services was "one way of articulating aristocratic opposition to the centralizing reforms of the

Prussian monarchy." Interestingly, opposition was strongest in the 1820s through the 1840s, a

period marked by growing royal authority and shrinking privileges for the traditional nobility.[31]

These missionary societies operated largely underground, as their separatist behavior

made them targets of surveillance, both from police and state religious authorities. Gerlach was

made to denounce his affiliation with "separatists" before city officials in Merseburg after a tip

from local priests that he was establishing "special congregations." Police raided the estate of

Heinrich von Below in Brandenburg during a prayer meeting, recording and fining all visitors. In

a case similar to what the Mormons would encounter in Prussia thirty years later, the consistory

of Königsberg exiled missionary Friedrich Händes of the Berlin Society for his "separatist

teachings." They accused Händes in 1830 of using an excessively "millenarian tone," inciting

"intense bouts of prayer," and having a "disruptive social effect." Händes went before the

Ministry for church, health, and educational affairs in Berlin and, after two days of questioning,

was barred from proselytizing in Königsberg and worshipping publically in Berlin.[32]

Like the estate pietests, the Old Lutherans grew out of the discontent surrounding the

Prussian Union of 1817. Their leaders renounced the state's "pagan Calvinist" liturgy and

rejected liberal attempts to institute a watered-down, royal Protestantism throughout Prussia.

Again, since the Old Lutherans moved outside the boundaries of the state church, they were

subject to police stakeouts and persecution, thus pushing them underground. Pastors caught

publically using old liturgical practices lost their right to minister. If suspended pastors continued

---

[31] Leopold von Gerlach, 1 May 1816, quoted in Berdahl, *Politics of the Prussian Nobility*, 42 and Clark, *Politics of Conversion*, 218–29, 228, 218. For an excellent summation of German social changes in the Vormärz (1815–30), and an analysis of the peasantry's changing roles, see Blackbourn, *Long Nineteenth Century*, 91–120.

[32] For Gerlach and Von Below's interaction with state authorities, see Clark, "Politics of Revival," 42–54. For Händes' hearing in Berlin, see Clark, *Politics of Conversion*, 217–20.

to provide religious services, authorities could imprison them. In 1838, the dismissed Old

Lutheran pastor Senkel was still traveling throughout Silesia taking on numerous appearances

and performing illegal sacramental acts. The *Neue Würzburger Zeitung* reported in June that

Senkel had even disguised himself as a woman to administer communion to Lutherans in a

cellar.[33]

Frederick William III's death in 1840 softened government action against the Old

Lutherans, and the dispute effectively came to an end when his successor, Frederick William IV

offered religious concessions in 1845. Still, persecution in the 1830s led some five thousand Old

Lutherans to emigrate. The second largest group immigrated to the US, and would come to form

the Lutheran Missouri Synod. Those who stayed behind moved into William IV's Evangelical

Lutheran Church, the organization that would come to define acceptable forms of Christianity in

Prussia throughout the nineteenth century and eventually spearhead a new round of persecution,

this time against Prussian Catholics, in the *Kulturkampf* (Culture War) of the 1870s.[34]

For groups deemed non-Christian, there was effectively no way to become incorporated

into the Evangelical fold. After consolidating Protestantism's loose ends in Prussia, William IV

instituted the Tolerance Edict of 1847, allowing citizens for the first time to leave a state

confession (i.e., Protestantism or Catholicism) without joining a new one. Doing so, however,

did not guarantee tolerance as we understand it today, despite the Edict's wording:

> We are resolved, on the one hand, to extend Our strongest sovereign protection to the Protestant
> and Roman Catholic churches privileged historically and through state treaty and to allow them to
> retain the enjoyment of their particular rights; it is, on the other hand, equally Our unshakable will
> to maintain unabridged the freedom of belief and conscience for Our subjects laid down in the

---

[33] Groh, *Nineteenth-Century German Protestantism*, 35–50.

[34] Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 417–28. For more on the *Kulturkampf* and its legacy within the history of Prussian
Protestantism, see Rebecca Ayako Bennette, *Fighting for the Soul of Germany: The Catholic Struggle for Inclusion
after Unification* (Cambridge, MA, 2012); Jonathon Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany*
(Princeton, 1984); and George S. Williamson, "A Religious Sonderweg? Reflections on the Sacred and the Secular
in the Historiography of Modern Germany," *Church History* 75 (March 2006): 139–56.

General Law, and to permit them the freedom to associate for a common faith and religious worship according to the stipulations of the general laws of the state.[35]

On the surface, this appeared to put Prussia on the same course of constitutional secularization as Britain, which had seen the repeal of certain religious requirements in the late 1820s. But an added provision ensured that the government would grant privileges only to those religions with "a constitution similar to those of the parties of the Westphalian Peace of 1648," that is, "those who accepted something like the Apostolic Confession." For all other groups, including the Mormons, the government outlawed public worship, invalidated baptisms and marriages, created extraneous membership fees, barred civil servants from converting, and closely monitored religious services.[36] The connection between church, state, and civil liberties in Germany, and thus the consequences of joining a minority religion, were much stronger than in Britain, where Mormon leaders like Spencer had enjoyed so much success.

Pierre Bordieu's thoughts on established religions and their relation to minority faiths goes a long way toward explaining the religious atmosphere in nineteenth-century Prussia: "the church is objectively opposed to the sect as the ordinary organization (banal and banalizing) is to the extraordinary action of contesting the ordinary order." Ordinary order in Prussia implied relative harmony among the state's sanctioned confessions; all other religions threatened to upset that balance. Todd H. Weir demonstrates how this was true of German Free Religionists in the mid-nineteenth century, similar to struggles among pietists and Old Lutherans decades earlier. The government maintained strict definitions of religious dissent, which made minority protestant offshoots like Mormonism every bit as dangerous as separatist and secularist

---

[35] "Patent, die Bildung neuer Religionsgesellschaften betreffend," 30 March 1847 quoted in Todd H. Weir, *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Rise of the Fourth Confession* (New York, 2014), location 1042.
[36] Ibid., location 1582, 1027–2120.

movements. After the state defined acceptable religious practices with the Edict of 1847, and

then suppressed political and religious dissidents in the Revolution of 1848, Mormons began

their first real missionary efforts in the German states. The ordinary order, that which

missionaries like Spencer aimed to subvert, had never been stronger.[37]

On Spencer and Houtz's second day in Prussia, they began to seriously doubt their

mission's chance of success. Fay and Barnard, the two American Embassy workers, had warned

them about challenging the Evangelical Church, with its direct ties to state power. Now Spencer

and Houtz wondered what operating in such a country might actually mean. At their hotel,

Spencer thought of possible ways to address the Prussian people, perhaps by moving their

operation underground, into private meetinghouses, as the Saints had done with limited success

in France, Sweden, and Italy. But Prussia, he decided, was different: "We could not even stop an

hour in any person's house, private or public, without sending our passport to the police-office,

to give notice of our whereabouts." Furthermore, it would be difficult to trust potential converts,

even in their own homes, "lest [they] should prove to be minion[s] of Government in disguise."[38]

That night, Spencer dreamt that he was crossing a wooden beam suspended high above

ground in an abandoned barn. Part way across, he realized that he could go no further and so

climbed his way down to safety. When he awoke the next morning, the spirit spoke to him,

saying, "[This is the way that I revealed my will to Soloman [sic] in a dream," which Spencer

took to mean that the two missionaries needed to leave Prussia. On whether or not missionary

activity could begin there in the next few years, Spencer wrote, "our conclusion was in the

---

[37] Pierre Bordieu, "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," *Comparative Social Research* 13 (1991): 24 and Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, location 1027–2117. The Free Religionists were a secular group in Prussia who fought for, and failed to achieve, sanctioned status as an acceptable religious confession in the country. As the Revolution of 1848 neared, they became affiliated with liberal revolutionaries, as their religion marked them as anti-royal separatists.

[38] Spencer, *Prussian Mission*, 5–6.

negative." Still, they thought it appropriate to seek an audience with the king, "on principles of civility at least," and make their case for tolerance. On 29 January they sent a letter to V. Raumer, the state's Minister of Public Worship, asking to explain their religion, share religious texts with the king, and "preach and publish to his Majesty's subjects." After sending the letter, Spencer thought again of the wooden beam, growing more certain that "we might have to jump in order to escape something worse."[39]

In addition to Spencer's experience in Prussia and his interpretation of the failed 1848 Revolutions, missionary reports from elsewhere in Europe suggested that his mission could face government resistance. When John Taylor, the future third president of the Mormon church, returned to the Salt Lake Valley in 1852 after a three-year mission in Europe, he stressed how exceptional England's religious climate was compared to the continent's as a whole. His travels had taken him first to Liverpool, then onto France where he was eventually banned from the country, and finally to Denmark and Hamburg, where he remained under constant police surveillance. "You may pick out our most inferior Elders, in point of talent and ability," he reasoned, "and send them to England to preach and preside, and they think they are great men there." However, when faced with the continent's difficulties, those same missionaries would "dwindle down into nothing," because, as Taylor explained, "the nations of Europe know nothing about liberty." He blamed this general condition on the unfortunate results of the "late revolution," which had degraded "the spirit of the people," strengthened government oversight, and jeopardized "protection for the Elders." This left missionaries with few options but to mask their true intentions and convert members secretly, even in countries like France where there existed a nominal liberty. "You had the liberty to speak," Taylor explained, "but might be put in

---

[39] Ibd., 7, 6–7.

prison for doing so. You had liberty to print, but they might burn what you had printed, and put you into confinement for it." Religious intolerance, not only among the people, but seemingly ingrained within European governments, was an immovable barrier—one for which early missions in Britain had not prepared the Saints.[40]

Just two years earlier, when mission activity was limited to Britain, the church viewed intolerance as proof that their message was rapidly spreading. In a letter to the editor of the Shewsbury Chronicle, an English paper in Liverpool, a local reverend warned against burning Mormon tracts, arguing that to do so would only fuel their movement. Orson Pratt, then editor of the *Millennial Star*, responded confidently, saying, "The Rev. Gentleman might as well strive to dip the ocean dry with a spoon, as try and stop the spread of truth by burning a few tracts." The numbers did not lie. By 1850, there were 30,000 Saints in Britain, up from 4,000 in 1840. Elder William M'Ghie, a missionary in northern England, claimed that this growth rate would force Christians to accept the inherent truth of Mormonism, and show that progress in America was not "an exception to the general rule." The *Millennial Star* frequently published missionary stories and "miraculous signs" attesting to the church's inevitable growth. One popular example came from Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde, both apostles in the church, who managed to convert an entire village of hostile nonbelievers. The people crowded around the two apostles, saying, "please sir, will you baptize me?" and Heber reported feeling as though, "the very ground we trod upon was holy."[41] Such stories confirmed that no village, no religion, and no government could stop the Mormon Kingdom of God from rolling onward.

---

[40] "Elder John Taylor's Mission to Europe in 1849–1852," delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, 22 August 1852, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1: 17, 18–9, 21, 22, http://jod.mrm.org/1/16.

[41] "Letter to the Editor," *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 12 June 1850; "Another Example of Christian Intolerance," *Millennial Star*, 15 June 1850; and "Evidence of the Divine Authority of the Latter-day Gospel, from its Rapid Progress," *Millennial Star*, 1 June 1850.

In his final editorial from the 1850 issue of the *Millennial Star*, Orson Pratt published a

message to European governments that set the tone for continental missionary efforts. His

warning exemplifies the church's optimistic global outlook in 1850, only two years before

Taylor's somber report in Salt Lake City:

> Our proclamation is unto kings, queens, lords, and nobles, rulers and ruled; all are required to list, to give heed, and to obey. None are exempt—none can escape, for the Lord God Almighty has spoken; and He is a King of kings and Lord of lords, and controlleth the destiny of nations, according to his good will and pleasure.[42]

Of course, this proclamation came after a decade of proselytizing in fields with long histories of

religious tolerance. This is not to say that Saints in Britain traveled freely and unharmed

throughout the country. But when angry mobs tried to break up meetings in Cambridgeshire, or

threw rocks at missionaries in Herefordshire, the Mormons could appeal to "magistrates and the

law of the land, that all may be honoured in their respective spheres."[43] Expansion was difficult,

and often near impossible, elsewhere because, like in Prussia, countries did not operate with

separate political and religious spheres.

As the *Millennial Star* began to report on missions throughout the continent, a pattern

emerged whereby the church measured each new location against Britain's political and religious

climate. When Lorenzo Snow, the eventual fifth president of the church, first arrived in

Piedmont, Italy in 1850, he remarked, "this is the freest government in Italy." By the end of one

of his first reports, Snow stood atop a mountain, which he had just named "Mt. Brigham," and

looked out to all of the villages soon to be converted. Piedmont was situated in the Waldensian

Valleys, an area known for its unique Protestant history and one that missionaries believed the

---

[42] Orson Pratt, "Editorial," *Millennial Star*, 1 December 1850.

[43] "Annoying the Saints and Disturbing their Meetings," *Millennial Star*, 9 April 1852.

government would spend less energy policing.[44] Still, Snow soon realized that they were not able

to preach in public, and that the valleys' "conniving priests" could use the police to disband even

their private meetings. Jabez Woodward, one of Snow's companions, was called before the

magistrates in Piedmont twice for orchestrating private meetings and eventually had his passport

revoked. After two years moving in and out of Italy, Snow admitted feeling "far away from the

religious liberty enjoyed in England." In 1854, Woodward, who obtained French residency in

order to reenter Italy and continue another two years of mission work, admitted that Piedmont

had provided the Saints' only true converts. He regarded "Mt. Brigham" and the surrounding

mountains as "walls of intolerance," against which the rest of Italy remained permanently

guarded. Italy's people may have been willing to "heed the call, and obey," as Orson Pratt had

instructed, but its "police and priestcraft" were not.[45]

Throughout the 1850s, the *Star* continued to publish miraculous missionary stories as

they had done earlier in Britain, but instead of describing conversion experiences, they more

often dealt with triumphs over political and religious persecution. Elder Forssgren, the first

missionary in Sweden, was surprised to find that a country with such a long Protestant history

could be so opposed to "every innovation of the Lutheran religion." Within a month of his

arrival, the "priests and chief authorities" banned him from the country, despite the people's

obvious "panting for liberty." After his official examination, as he was being escorted out of the

---

[44] Lorenzo Snow, "Organization of the Church in Italy," *Millennial Star*, 1 December 1850. For more on the Mormons' missionary history in Italy, see Michael W. Homer, "The Waldensian Valleys: Seeking 'Primitive Christianity' in Italy," *Journal of Mormon History* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 134–87 and Eric R. Dursteler, "One-Hundred Years of Solitude: Mormonism in Italy, 1867–1964," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 4 (2011): 119–48.

[45] Lorenzo Snow, "The Italian Mission," 1 April 1852; Jabez Woodward, "Italian Correspondence," 18 September 1852; and Jabez Woodward, "The Italian Mission," 28 January 1854, all *Millennial Star*. For examples of similar early hardships in Hamburg, where the German Mission would eventually be based, see George P. Dykes, "George P. Dykes diary, 1849 October–1852 April," MS 1762, Dykes, George Parker 1814–1888, Church History Library, Salt Lake City. Dykes served as the first president of the German Mission until June 1852.

town of Geffle, the crowds around him allegedly began to shout in unison, "Hura til Propheten (Hurra for the Prophet)," in open defiance of the authorities. Despite the persecution, Forssgren had spread the Mormon message, reaching a sheltered, guarded populace eager to hear it.[46]

The *Millennial Star* also depicted civil authorities as being complicit in crimes against missionaries. Outside of Copenhagen in 1852, a crowd of men gathered around a farmhouse where Elder Fulkman was preaching, and announced that they had received police approval to kill him. They managed to drag Fulkman out of the house and proceeded to beat him until suddenly, he "cried with a loud voice to God for protection, which seems to have struck them with awe, and they left him bleeding and half dead upon the ground." When Fulkman called on the police for help, they refused and advised him to leave town before the mob reappeared. In his own commentary on the event, then editor of the *Star*, Franklin D. Richards, concluded, "We are fully of the opinion that it is better to trust in God than men"—which was to say that missionaries could no longer depend on a separate civil body to protect their religious rights.[47]

By the fourth day of Spencer's mission to Prussia, the government's role in protecting their own state's religion at the expense of minority faiths had become clear. After submitting his letter to the Minister of Public Worship, Spencer received a message from the president of the king's police to appear before a "police court" on 1 February to speak on behalf of his religion and to clearly articulate his intentions—a fairly routine procedure for Mormon missionaries by this point. First, the presiding ministers, public defenders of the Prussian Allgemeines Landrecht (General State Law), asked him to explain whether Mormonism paired with the evangelical or

---

[46] "Elder Forssgren Examined Before the Chief Authorities of Sweden—Is Banished from the Kingdom," *Millennial Star*, 1 January 1851.

[47] "Persecutions and Prosperity of the Church in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden," *Millennial Star*, 2 October 1852. For more examples of the church's response to persecution in Europe, see "The Saints of God, Versus the World," 15 March 1852; T. B. H. Stenhouse, "Onward on the Continent," 9 October 1852; "Intelligence from the German Mission," 13 November 1852; and "The Coming Crisis—How to Meet it," 30 April 1853, all *Millennial Star*.

Catholic faith, the only two variations recognized in Prussia. Before he could finish answering

the question, they asked him to elaborate on the relationship between Jesus Christ and Joseph

Smith, and to explain what role polygamy played in the lives of the church's members. This

stunted questioning continued for close to an hour before the ministers stopped and had Spencer

sign a printed copy of his declarations, which he did, happy to leave "the testimony of two

witnesses bearing the eternal Priesthood of God."[48] With Spencer's declaration in hand, the

ministers disappeared into "some distant apartment or office," and returned some time later with

the higher authorities' decision, presumably from the Minister of Public Worship: "You, Orson

Spencer and Jacob Houtz, are hereby commanded to depart out of this kingdom to-morrow

morning, under the penalty of *transportation*, and you are also forbidden ever to return to this

kingdom hereafter, under the penalty of being transported." When Spencer asked whether they

had committed any crime to warrant such an abrupt banishment, the presiding official responded,

"No! but it is your religion that has caused it." After just five days in Prussia, the two

missionaries left with barely enough time to gather their belongings. Taken together with

struggles elsewhere on the continent over the past three years, Spencer knew that "the great

power of the devil" had orchestrated this ban, working through Europe's governments to keep

the populace "confined to the narrow, dark chambers of their natal embryo." Even when Mr.

Barnard from the American Embassy wrote to Spencer to reassure him that Prussia had a long

history of turning minority religions away—the estate pietists and Old Lutherans among them—

Spencer stuck with the church's developing narrative that put failed revolutions at the center of

---

[48] Spencer, *Prussian Mission*, 10, 10–2

Prussia's intransigence. "Where revolutions have recently occurred," he wrote, "[Europe] recoils back towards her own nocturnal darkness."[49]

The *Star*'s report on the Prussian Mission was short, precise, and provided no miraculous interpretation. Franklin D. Richards, then editor, lamented Prussia's lost opportunity and its people's inability to alter their fate, which now seemed irredeemably sealed. "It is not a light thing," he wrote, "for the authorities of a nation to reject the servants of the Lord, and refuse to receive their testimony; they thereby turn the key of salvation against themselves and the light of truth cannot shine in their souls."[50] With his decision to ban Spencer, Raumer, Prussia's Minister of Public Worship, blocked 20 million Prussians from salvation before the coming Millennium and added further proof of a coming crisis.

Spencer's was the first in a string of bans in 1853. In early February, city officials banished Daniel Carn, the German Mission president, from Hamburg after his eighth appearance in court. The police confiscated his religious texts, his money, and sought out the members he had converted to bring them back into the Evangelical fold. Jacob Secrist left Württemberg after less than a week and with no recorded conversions to his name. County representatives of the police and the church jointly conducted his trial, both questioning him on points of faith as the authorities in Prussia had done. After the trial, a policeman escorted Secrist to a steamboat and sent him on his way back to Liverpool. With similar haste, George C. Reiser, in his home region near Stuttgart, managed to baptize one man before the "priest and the authorities" called him in for an examination. The local priest claimed that Reiser was eroding the people's confidence in him and was attempting to undermine the religion of Stuttgart. Reflecting on his exile, Reiser

---

[49] Ibid., 11, 12, 13–4.
[50] "The Prussian Mission," *Millennial Star*, 26 February 1853.

wrote, "I have no doubt, if I had had liberty to preach publicly, I could soon have baptized hundreds." Finding no such liberty, he went back to Hamburg and then on to Liverpool where he joined Carn and Secrist.[51]

In the church's annual report from 1853, there is little evidence of hardship on the continent. It mentions that although some missionaries "have been persecuted," all have been blessed by the Lord, and have contributed to the church's "cheering progress" abroad. "Soon," the report predicts, "we hope to hear the Gospel going forth to every nation and kingdom."[52]

One month earlier, the *Star* published a report on the state of foreign missions more in line with missionaries' experiences and limitations over the past few years. In countries where the government imposed restrictions on religious observance (Italy, France, Switzerland, the German States, and Prussia), Richards claimed that no outside group could have influence over the people, "unless that influence tend directly to strengthen the political administration, and fasten it stronger upon the people." Governments in the "old world" were becoming "more and more sensible of their weakness," and so moving to clamp down on any hint of independent or outside thought. This was the language of counter-revolution, of governments doubling down on their success after 1848, a rhetorical shift five years in the making, and it was this message that supported and explained missionary reports into the 1850s.[53]

---

[51] "The German Mission," 5 March 1853 and "The German Mission, Secrist and Reiser: Travels and Labours of Elders Secrist and Riser in Saxe Meiningen, the Kingdom of Wirtemberg, &c.—Baptisms—The Elders Arrested, Examined, and Ordered out of the above Places," 4 June 1853, both *Millennial Star*. See also, Jacob F. Secrist, "Jacob F. Secrist diaries and reminiscences, 1852–1854," MS 1938, Secrist, Jacob Foutz, 1818–1855, Church History Library, Salt Lake City. For additional examples, see Daniel Tyler, "Daniel Tyler papers, 1853–1856, 1996," MS 4846, Tyler, Daniel 1816–1906, Church History Library, Salt Lake City and George Mayer, "George Mayer reminiscences and diary, 1853 January–1896 April," MS 1706, Mayer, George 1805–1896, Church History Library, Salt Lake City. Tyler served as the president of the French and German Missions from 1853 to 1856 and Mayer was a missionary who operated in Hamburg, and then later in Zurich, from 1852 to 1856.

[52] "Close of the Fiifteenth Volume of the 'Star,' *Millennial Star*, 31 December 1853.

[53] "Foreign Missions," *Millennial Star*, 12 November 1853.

By February 1854, Europe's major powers, the brittle toes of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, were engaged with one another in what appeared to be the world's final struggle. Commenting on the conflict that would come to be known as the Crimean War, the *Millennial Star*'s editor Samuel W. Richards predicted that "war may never more be taken from the earth until the Lord Jesus sets his feet upon Mount Olivet." In these uncertain times, there was little more for missionaries to do. War would now hasten the millennium, and "forward the gathering to Zion," at a rate "ten times faster" than the Saints could manage on their own. The Devil's autocratic warfare had replaced God's liberal revolution; government's millennial agency had superseded the people's. The signs of the times in the mid-1850s guaranteed a pre-millennial end to the world, and left the Salt Lake Valley as humanity's only refuge: "Among the vast multitude of nations and people, [no truth] can be found, except in the peaceful valleys of Utah."[54]

Of course, this narrative construction of the world did not last. The Crimean War failed to bring the world under, just as the revolutions of 1848 had failed to save it. The relative peace that emerged after the war's end in 1856 once again popularized the decentralized, global concept of Zion. On a visit to England in 1861, Brigham Young announced, "there will be no nook or corner upon the earth but what will be in Zion. It will all be Zion." This gathering geography would close in on Salt Lake again with Germany's ominous unification in 1871, and once again open back up to the world in the late 1880s with the implementation of the Edmunds-Tucker Act and the Perpetual Emigration Fund's dissolution.[55] At the same time in the mid- to late

---

[54] "There Shall Be Wars and Rumours of Wars," 18 February 1854 and "The World's Degeneracy," 29 September 1855, both *Millennial Star*.

[55] Brigham Young, "Gathering of the Saints, Etc.," 28 July 1861, Liverpool, EL, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9: 138, http://jod.mrm.org/9/137 and Jones, "War and Confusion in Babylon," 115–25. Also by US Immigration law in 1891 which attempted to restrict Mormon immigration and citizenship because they were polygamists—see http://library.uwb.edu/static/USimmigration/1891_immigration_act.html and http://library.uwb.edu/static/USimmigration/26%20stat%201084.pdf.

nineteenth century, religious restrictions eased throughout Europe and led to successful, permanent mission sites in countries like Germany, France, and Denmark, where the Saints had previously been turned away.

Today, Zion's place and importance in the world is probably closest to Joseph Smith's original definition—it exists where the people "are pure in heart." Rattled by failed revolutions, the threat of perpetual war, and a continental intolerance that often barred missionaries from exercising any measure of religious freedom, Mormons in the mid-nineteenth century could not maintain that understanding of the world that the church's earliest international missions had reinforced. Orson Spencer's brief experience in Prussia highlights this reality. Richard Bushman argues that "[s]uccess in Britain dispelled any thought that Mormonism was an American religion," but it also distorted the church's image as inherently European or global at a time when governments throughout the continent defended their country's religious identity in favor of their religious liberty.[56] Viewed not as liberators, or even as one religious group among a tolerated multitude, but instead marked as a threat to countries' civil and religious status quos, the church had to adapt its strategy and alter its expectations in Europe. The *Millennial Star* encouraged missionaries to save who they could, create a clear path back to the Salt Lake Valley—the only viable stake of Zion—and to prepare for Babylon's inevitable fall. Their post-revolutionary context had helped to fuel their pre-millennial view of Europe and the world at large. Today, on the second floor of the Church's visitor center in Salt Lake City, one can still see a large painting of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, complete with the metallic statue and its five unique stages, including the brittle toes representing the world's final great powers. However,

---

[56] Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 409.

now, nestled between two other Old Testament paintings, it looks more like an historic, symbolic

reminder of—as opposed to a present-day roadmap for—the world's latter days.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Dykes, George P., "George P. Dykes diary, 1849 October–1852 April," MS 1762, Dykes, George Parker 1814–1888, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

Latter-day Saints Millennial Star, The, vols. 1–13. Parley Pratt: Liverpool, EL, 1848–1855.

Mayer, George, "George Mayer reminiscences and diary, 1853 January–1896 April," MS 1706, Mayer, George 1805–1896, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

Pratt, Orson. *New Jerusalem and Equality and Oneness of the Saints: A Forecast of Events to be Established by a Chosen and Dedicated People*. Liverpool, EL: n.p., 1849.

Pratt, Parley. *A Letter to the Queen, Touching the Signs of the Times, and the Political Destiny of the World*. Manchester, EL: n.p., 1841.

Pratt, Parley P., *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People. . .* New York: W. Sandford, 1837.

Secrist, Jacob F., "Jacob F. Secrist diaries and reminiscences, 1852–1854," MS 1938, Secrist, Jacob Foutz, 1818–   1855, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

Smith, Jospeh, Jr. *Doctrine and Covenants* [1832] 82:14. Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964.

Spencer, Orson. *The Prussian Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Report of Elder Orson Spencer, A.B., to President Brigham Young*. Liverpool, EL: S. W. Richards, 1853.

Taylor, John, "Elder John Taylor's Mission to Europe in 1849–1852," delivered in the . Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, 22 August 1852, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, http://jod.mrm.org/1/16.

Taylor, John. *The Government of God*. Liverpool, EL: n.p., 1853.

Taylor, John, "To the archbishops, the bishops and clergy of the Church of England, circa 1840," MS 4361, Talyor, John 1808–1887, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

Tyler, Daniel, "Daniel Tyler papers, 1853–1856, 1996," MS 4846, Tyler, Daniel 1816–1906, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

Whittaker, David J., comp. *The Essential Orson Pratt*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991.

Young, Brigham, "Faithfulness and Apostasy," 5 June 1853, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, http://jod.mrm.org/2/248.

Young, Brigham. "Gathering of the Saints, Etc.," 28 July 1861, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9: 138, http://jod.mrm.org/9/137.

Secondary Sources

Books

Alexander, Thomas, and James B. Allen, eds. *Manchester Mormons: The Journal of William Clayton, 1840 to 1842*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1974.

Allen, James B., Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker. *Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992.

Applegate, Celia. *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Barclay, David E., and Eric D. Weitz, eds. *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1990*. New York: Berghahn Books, 1998.

Bennette, Rebecca Ayako. *Fighting for the Soul of Germany: The Catholic Struggle for Inclusion after Unification.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Berdahl, Robert M. *The Politics of the Prussian Nobility*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Blackbourn, David. *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Blackbourn, David, and Geoff Eley. *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1984.

Bushman, Richard Lyman. *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. New York, Vintage Books, 2005.

Clark, Christopher. *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Clark, Christopher. *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia, 1728–1941*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Groh, John E. *Nineteenth Century German Protestantism: The Church as Social Model*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982.

Kuehne, Raymond. *Mormons as Citizens of a Communist State: A Documentary History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in East Germany, 1945–1990.* Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010.

Neilson, Reid L., and Fred E. Woods, ed. *Go Ye into All the World: The Growth & Development of Mormon Missionary Work*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012.

Nelson, David Conley. *Moroni and the Swastika: Mormons in Nazi Germany*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015.

Roberts, B. H. A Comprehensive *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1930.

Scharffs, Gilbert. *Mormonism in Germany: A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Germany Between 1840 and 1970*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970.

Sheehan, James J. *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: Humanity Books, 1995.

Sperber, Jonathon. *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Underwood, Grant. *The Millenarian World of the Early Mormonism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Van Orden, Bruce A. *Building Zion: The Latter-Day Saints in Europe*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996.

Weir, Todd H. *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Rise of the Fourth Confession*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Widmer, Kurt. *Unter Zions Panier: Mormonism and it Interaction with Germany and its People 1840-1990*. Berlin: Franz Steiner, 2013.

Articles, Dissertations, and Book Chapters

Aird, Polly, "Why Did the Scots Convert?," *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 1 (2000): 91–122.

Allen, James B., and Malcom R. Thorp, "The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Classes," *BYU Studies* 15 (Summer 1975): 1–23.

Bartholomew, Ronald E., "The Patterns of Missionary Work and Emigration in Nineteenth Century Buckinghamshire, England," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 1 (Spring 2008): 99–136.

Bordieu, Pierre, "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," *Comparative Social Research* 13 (1991): 1–44.

Clark, Christopher, "The Politics of Revival: Pietists, Aristocrats, and the State Church in Early Nineteenth-Century Prussia," in *Between Reform, Reaction, and Resistance: Studies in the History of German Conservatism from 1789 to 1945*, ed. Larry Eugene Jones and James N. Retallack (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993), 31–60.

Dursteler, Eric R., "One-Hundred Years of Solitude: Mormonism in Italy, 1867–1964," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 4 (2011): 119–48.

Fleming, Stephen J., "The Religious Heritage of the British Northwest and the Rise of Mormonism," *Church History* 77 (March 2008): 73–104.

Homer, Michael W., "The Waldensian Valleys: Seeking 'Primitive Christianity,' in Italy," *Journal of Mormon History* 31 (Spring 2005): 134–87.

Morris, David M., "The Rhetoric of the Gathering and Zion: Consistency through Change 1831–1920," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 1 (Spring 2008): 154–71.

Jones, Zachary R., "'War and Confusion in Babylon': Mormon Reaction to German Unification, 1864–80," *Journal of Mormon History* 37 (Fall 2011): 115–50.

Landry, Stan Michael. "That *All* May Be One? Church Unity, Luther Memory, and Ideas of the German Nation, 1817–1883." PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2010.

Livingston, Craig, "Eyes on 'the Whole European World': Mormon Observers of the 1848 Revolutions," *Journal of Mormon History* 31 (Summer 2005): 78–112.

McCelellan, Richard D., "President Louis Bertrand and the Closure of the French Mission, 1859–64," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Europe*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon and Brent L. Top (Provo: BYU, Department of Church History and Doctrine, 2003), 23–46.

Mulder, William, "Mormonism's 'Gathering'': An American Doctrine with a Difference," *Church History* 23 (September 1954): 248–64.

Thorp, Malcolm R., "The Religious Backgrounds of Mormon Converts in Britain," *Journal of Mormon History* 4, no. 1 (1977): 51–66.

Thorp, Malcolm R., "Popular Millennialism in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of Mormon History 31* (Spring 2005): 89–111.

Williamson, George S., "A Religious Sonderweg? Reflections on the Sacred and the Secular in the Historiography of Modern Germany," *Church History* 75 (March 2006): 139–56.