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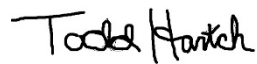
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“HE DENIETH NONE THAT COME UNTO HIM”
THE MORMON-JEWISH RELATIONSHIP DURING THE HOLOCAUST AND WORLD WAR II

BY

ERICA LAUREN SHAW

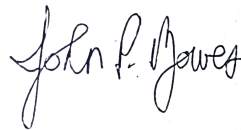
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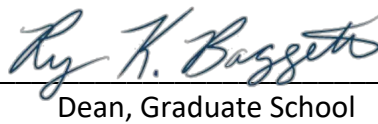
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BY

ERICA LAUREN SHAW

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

2020

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DEDICATION

While few things in my adult life ever seem to go exactly as planned, I have been fortunate enough to have one constant: my dog, Lily Ho (aka the Ho). From the start of undergrad to the completion of graduate school, all the adventures in-between and yet to be had, Lily has been there to interrupt paper writing and book reading for much needed dog walks as well as to remind me that head pats and belly rubs are mutually beneficial. I proudly dedicate this tremendous milestone in my academic life to her.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not be here without the support of friends, family, and, of course, the wonderful faculty of Eastern Kentucky University. I will certainly forget someone here so I will not attempt to name everyone that has supported me, but I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to acknowledge Dr. Todd Hartch. He not only encouraged me to pursue completion of my thesis after enlisting in the military but worked tirelessly with me despite a thirteen hour time difference and being separated by the Pacific Ocean; he spent hours on edits and suggestions that I was occasionally too stubborn to accept, and always made time to discuss and guide my writing and research until I had a product I could be truly proud of. To Dr. Hartch and everyone else who always pushed me to continue my education and pursue my goals, I cannot thank you enough.

ABSTRACT

The Church of Latter-day Saints of Jesus Christ stumbled into fruition and global recognition after decades of oppression and resistance from its contemporaries. Despite its rocky beginnings, the Church's membership remained largely friendly to anyone who expressed interest in their gospel. Among those whom they shared a positive relationship with were the Jewish people. The research presented here explored the history of that relationship from its doctrinal significance to its greatest test: the Holocaust and World War II.

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I. Introduction

Naziism, Latter-day Saints and the Jewish People

“Sometimes called "the longest hatred," antisemitism has persisted in many forms for over two thousand years. The racial antisemitism of the National Socialists (Nazis) took hatred of Jews to a genocidal extreme, yet the Holocaust began with words and ideas: stereotypes, sinister cartoons, and the gradual spread of hate.” Excerpt from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum¹

From anti-Semitic laws to targeted destruction of property and outright murder, the Jewish people have been one of, if not *the*, most persecuted people in the history of the world. Despite Christians competing for that unfortunate title, they have largely been the perpetrators of violence and discrimination against Jews. They have excused these actions in numerous ways, with the most iconic being the death of Jesus at the hands of Jewish people. Unfortunately, they have also started and utilized rumors ranging from “blood libels” — using “the blood of Christian children for ritual purposes” — to serving the anti-Christ and even accusing Jews for the “Black Death” of the 14th century, among others, to support “pogroms” — locally planned attacks against Jewish people — and advance a hateful ideology that has never ceased to exist.² Unlike the majority of Christian sects, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had a remarkably clean slate in regards to anti-Semitic history and behavior. They acknowledged and even celebrated the Jewish heritage within the Christian world, and had their fate intrinsically tied to the Jewish destiny. For these reasons alone, one might have assumed it obvious that Saints supported and protected their Jewish neighbors, yet when the Jewish community came under attack in Nazi Germany, “in spite of this

¹ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Antisemitism in History: From the Early Church to 1400,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (online edition), www.ushmm.org.

² *Ibid.*

Only a few decades apart, the images shown depict the similarities in the wars waged against the Mormon and Jewish people. Media use of octopus imagery evoked fear and disgust in audiences as the “monster” . . . villainize[d] and de-humanize[d]” those it was depicted as (i.e. Mormons, Jews), a common tactic in creating an “enemy.”⁶ The various negative labels these churches were tagged with created tension wherever their followers spread to and, despite having several of the same scriptures as mainstream Christianity, they were often considered devil-like and embodying evilness. Both were painted as parasitic with ultimate goals of controlling the communities, even the world, they lived in. Obviously, Jews had been experiencing this for a significantly longer time than their Mormon neighbors, but the parallels were uncanny.

The implications of the Latter-day Saints’ reaction to the Jewish Holocaust were not immediately obvious but understanding the history of the Church, especially their persecution and relationship with diversity, has made it abundantly more clear. Furthermore, their actions both in the United States and abroad during and through the rise of Naziism, from Church leadership down to the members of missions, revealed a severe lack of conviction. Even more troubling was the way postwar Latter-day Saints represented their experience during that time, as well as how they responded to the Jewish community afterwards.

⁶ Rebekah Clark, “Political Cartoon Explanations,” *2020 Better Days*, 5, accessed on 20 June 2020, www.utahwomenshistory.org.

A Brief History of Mormonism and Race

When William Tyndale published one of the first English Bibles in the 1500s he did this by translating centuries old texts that provided the cornerstone of Christianity. Editions of the Old Testament were first written centuries before the birth of Christ and the New Testament coming after to tell of his travels and teachings, both of which have undergone many interpretations, additions and revisions since. Tyndale changed the course of history with his dedication to scripture, yet his life was ended because of it; he was charged for heresy, then was “strangled to death while tied at the stake” and finally set on fire.⁷ The same fate would have almost certainly been met had someone at the time attempted to shake the foundation of Christianity with an entirely new, undiscovered testament, yet that was exactly what happened some 300 years later. This new religion was called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its membership would come to be known as the Mormons.

In 1830, Joseph Smith completed his translation of the *Book of Mormon* and with that began a journey westward to proselytize among those interested in hearing about Jesus’ time in North America. Despite slavery being legal and citizens pushing for the removal of native peoples from lands “settled” by Americans, Smith specifically sought out the company of American Indians and was not concerned or hesitant when African Americans joined his audiences. In fact, one of the crowds he preached to in Ohio in 1830 brought forth a new believer: “Black Pete” a former slave and one of the first of many African Americans to be welcomed in the movement.⁸ Understandably, Smith and his followers were met with a lot of skepticism their inclusiveness and the peculiar foundation of the religion. For example, the golden plates from which Smith received this new scripture were not allowed to be seen by anyone but him, and the names of some angels who appeared before him were unknown to audience members

⁷ Michael Farris, *From Tyndale to Madison: How the Death of an English Martyr Led to the American Bill of Rights* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 37.

⁸ W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), loc. 2676, Kindle Edition.

familiar with Christianity. Still they pressed on and managed to gather new followers in nearly every town they traversed. After only a year the Mormons declared their “New Jerusalem” in Independence, Missouri, and began the construction of their first temple.

The next fifteen years were littered with significant religious developments and several vicious attacks on the Latter-day Saints. (See appendix for a timeline of events in Latter-day Saint history.) The Prophet Joseph Smith was tarred and feathered by an angry mob in 1831; the Mormon community as a whole was subjected to numerous violent acts in 1833. One of the most fundamental revelations of Mormonism occurred in 1836 when Old Testament prophets appeared before a Latter-day Saints gathering and announced their faith’s responsibility “of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth” and ensuring their return to the Holy Land; the message was critical to their perception of the Jewish people, which caused additional strife in the future.⁹ Adding to their against-the-grain religion was the ordaining of Q. Walker Lewis and Elijah Abel, two African Americans, as priests in the Church in 1836 — this was the same time some Mormons began embracing the antislavery movement.¹⁰ Despite the *Book of Mormon* explicitly stating members “shall be a white and a delightsome people,” early Mormon perception of race was seen through a “Biblical lens” that indicated all people were descended from Noah’s sons — “Shem was the father of Asians, Ham gave rise to Africans, and Japheth to Europeans.”¹¹ Nevertheless, the gospel message in Phelps’s mind transcended those divisions. Phelps wrote in 1835 that “all the families of the earth ... should get redemption ... in Christ Jesus,” regardless of “whether they are descendants of Shem, Ham, or Japheth.”¹² (The desired growth in membership coupled with other revelations resulted in the line “shall be a white and delightsome people” later being changed to read “shall be a *pure*

⁹ Joseph Smith, *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013): 110-11

¹⁰ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, loc. 2959, Kindle edition.

¹¹ *Ibid*, loc. 2810, Kindle edition.

¹² *Ibid*.

and delightful people” in reference to Mormon followers.¹³) Not surprisingly, a meeting was held at a nearby courthouse to address Missouri’s Mormon “crisis” that same year.

These Missourians spoke of five things they were concerned about in reference to the LDS: “(1) They were poor. (2) Their religious differences stirred up prejudice. (3) Their Eastern customs and dialect were alien to the Missourians. (4) They opposed slavery. (5) They believed the Indians were God’s chosen people destined to inherit the land of Missouri with them.”¹⁴ The latter two reasons were somewhat founded in truth as their scripture “acknowledged the American Indian as a remnant of the house of Israel,” but their openness to black members was not rooted in antislavery rhetoric... yet.¹⁵ The feeling of unwelcomeness was not lost on the Mormons, but they continued with their lives and faith, even making their first international presence in England. In 1838, the Missouri State Militia attacked the Latter-day Saints in an event that is now referred to as the “Mormon War” in their history texts.¹⁶ This violent escalation was overwhelmingly supported by Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs and resulted in him issuing the “Extermination Order.” In this document, Boggs stated “Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State, if necessary, for the public peace. Their outrages are beyond all description.”¹⁷ The actions of the governor was interpreted as an open invitation for other Missourians to target Mormons which ended, for the time, after the Hawk’s Mill massacre and the death of 17 Latter-day Saint men, women and children. Brigham Young subsequently rallied

¹³ Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Church removes racial references in Book of Mormon headings: LDS scripture • Church drops “dark” and “skin of blackness” from Lamanite descriptions,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 20 Dec 2010, Salt Lake Tribune Archives, accessed on 2 June 2020, www.archive.sltrib.com.

¹⁴ *Church History in the Fulness of Times: Student Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 2003), loc. 5727, Kindle Edition.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, loc. 2480, Kindle Edition.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, loc. 6201, Kindle Edition.

¹⁷ Lilburn Boggs, *Governor Boggs’ Extermination Order* (MO Executive Order 44), Missouri Archives, www.sos.mo.gov, accessed on 2 June 2020.

most members and they followed him to Illinois and developed the town of Nauvoo where they experienced several years of peace.

With the distractions of danger temporarily relieved, Mormon Elder Orson Hyde was able to take his first international journey in 1841 and complete the monumental task of “dedicat[ing] the Holy Land for the return of the Jews” in Palestine.¹⁸ Interestingly, part of his preparation included requesting that Church literature be translated into German as he planned on visiting and proselytizing “German-speaking European Jews” on his trip.¹⁹ Elder Hyde met with “Jewish leaders in London” then “visited Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Frankfurt, distributing copies of an address to the Jews” while on his way to Jerusalem.²⁰ During the early 1840s, the Prophet Joseph Smith not only experienced revelations regarding polygamy and posthumous baptism, which reinvigorated the American public’s strong bias against Mormons, but he also attempted to advocate carefully on behalf of African Americans. Smith described his belief that “notions of black inferiority” were products of the environment and “not inherent racial characteristics,” and finally concluded, “change their situation with the white [and] they would be like them.”²¹ In 1844, the Mormon prophet campaigned for President on many progressive platforms including “pardon[ing] every convict,” a plan to “abolish slavery,” and, with the “red man’s *consent*,” to expand the country to the west coast.²² The American people, especially Latter-day Saints’ neighbors in Illinois and Missouri, did not respond favorably.

The year of 1844 saw a full return of violence and protest against the Latter-day Saints. Smith encouraged kindness amongst his followers. However, the general public simply refused to tolerate the Mormons’ progressive agenda and odd new practices, and a call for the arrest of Smith echoed throughout the state. Smith

¹⁸ *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, loc. 7259, Kindle Edition.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, loc. 7262, Kindle Edition.

²⁰ *Ibid*, loc. 7262-7270, Kindle Edition.

²¹ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, loc. 3037, Kindle Edition.

²² Joseph Smith, *General Smith’s Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States*, 7 February 1844, accessed 31 May 2020, josephsmithpapers.org. (Emphasis is author’s own.)

eventually surrendered himself, a move that ensured his unlawful death; he was held in a jail guarded by “professed assassins” who eventually allowed a masked mob to enter the facility and murder Smith. The Mormons were granted little time to honor their first martyr before Brigham Young was handed the throne. The harassment continued until community leaders, including Elder Young, decided to lead their people on a truly perilous journey west to find their “Deseret” in the Salt Lake Valley.²³

Many events occurred between the Mormons’ exodus from Nauvoo in 1846 and settlement in the Salt Lake Valley in late 1847, including the death of more than 700 fellow Saints during the expedition. Also during that brief time, many volunteered for the first Mormon military battalion used to assist in the Mexican-American War, the settlement of New Hope in California was made, and the establishment of significant leadership roles within the Church that are still used today. Newly-named President, Brigham Young, maintained his predecessor’s vision of spreading Mormon gospel to American Indians. He told his followers that their new settlement would allow them to be “connected with every tribe of Indians throughout America” and history showed that they certainly tried. Native Americans in Utah referred to most Americans as ““Merocats” . . . whom they entirely distrusted” but they referred to Mormons as the ““Mormonee” whom they generally liked.”²⁴ This relationship often crossed boundaries as seen through the eyes of non-Mormon, American settlers of the west. In 1857, news spread of Native Americans and Latter-day Saints teaming up to attack and raid a wagon train from Arkansas Called the Mountain Meadows Massacre, “approximately 120 in all” were murdered, including women and children, an event that further fueled the general public’s unsavory vision of the Mormons as immoral.²⁵

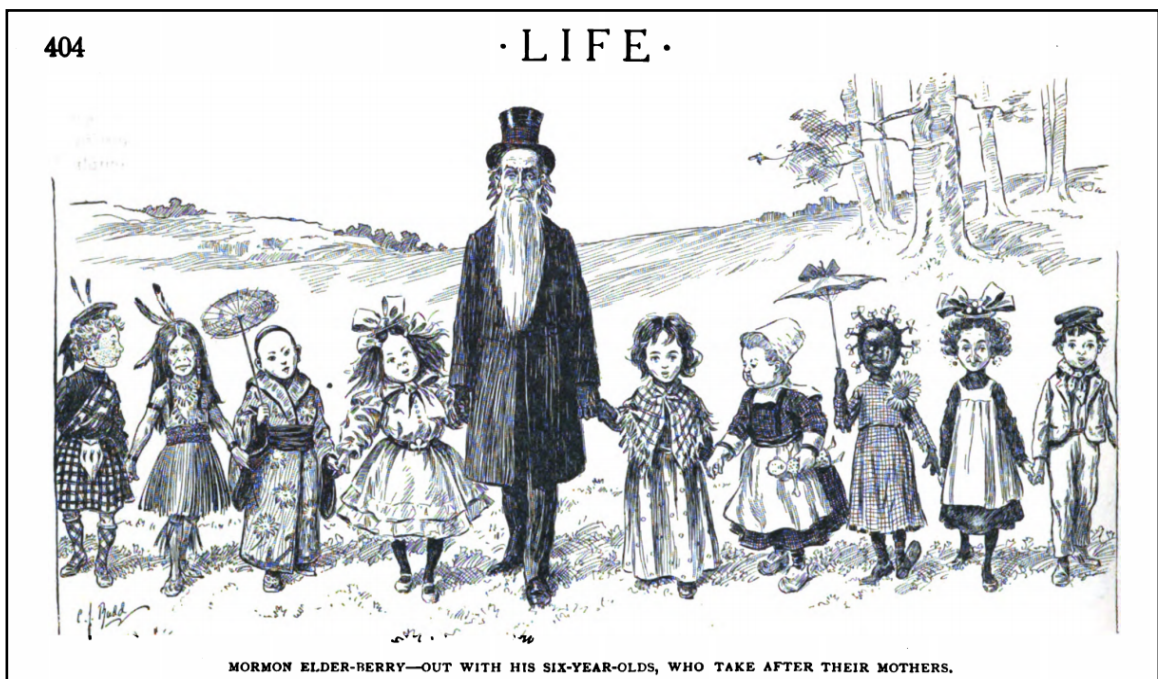
Despite relocating and even serving in the American military, Latter-day Saints were still disliked and distrusted. Their reputation was one that no major entities wanted to be associated with regardless of ideological parallels, like antislavery or

²³ *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, loc. 10122, Kindle Edition.

²⁴ *Ibid*, loc. 11121, Kindle Edition.

²⁵ *Ibid*, loc. 11136, Kindle Edition.

education reform — “Democrats . . . denounced the Mormons as vehemently as the Republicans did.”²⁶ That being said, Brigham Young did not share in his predecessor’s views on African American acceptance and, in 1852, announced a “race-based priesthood ban” believing black skin to be a curse of inferiority from God and further asserted an “inherent incapacity of blacks to govern whites.”²⁷ Due to his statements, many Mormons also refused “black men and women from temple worship” yet, according to the Church, “Pacific Islanders . . . black Fijians and Australian Aborigines” were always permitted to hold the priesthood.²⁸ Whether a product of their time or, as the author Paul W. Reeve called it, “the Mormon struggle for whiteness,” this ban did not necessarily help Latter-day Saints to achieve acceptance among fellow Christians or Americans in general as their diversity “issue” was never limited singularly to black membership. Rather it was a combination of racial inclusion, their observance of plural marriage, and several other practices perceived as immoral at the time.²⁹



²⁶ *Ibid*, loc. 11039, Kindle Edition.

²⁷ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, loc. 3466, Kindle Edition.

²⁸ *Ibid*, loc. 3501, Kindle Edition; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, *Race and the Priesthood*, accessed on 30 May 2020, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org>

²⁹ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, loc. 163, Kindle Edition.

Source: C.J. Rudd, "Mormon Elder-Berry-out with his six-year-olds, who take after their mothers," *LIFE* (28 April 1904), 404, accessed on 1 June 2020, <https://books.googleusercontent.com>.

Mormon scripture, like much of Christianity, explicitly separated the world's population into Jew and Gentile but it also called for the "literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes"; they believed Christ's return was dependent upon the Jewish population returning to the holy land of Jerusalem. Brigham Young and his team of Mormon leaders had not focused much on this since their arrival in Utah, but the years 1872-1873 saw a renewed interest "in a regathering of the Jews to Palestine" which shifted their focus back to Europe.³⁰ Few Jewish converts had occurred up to this point though they did exist and were committed to their new faith. For example, a convert named Levi Abrahams stood up to a federal judge that seemed to arrive in Utah equipped solely with an anti-Mormon agenda. While he harassed the community for a "lack of morals," Abrahams apparently commented on the "judges character" and was in turn "horsewhipped."³¹ In 1888, a German Rabbi by the name of Edward Joseph Isaacson converted to Mormonism, moved to Utah, and voluntarily "translated the *Book of Mormon* into Yiddish" yet it was never distributed; similarly, another Jewish convert "completed a translation . . . into Hebrew" in 1922 that was never distributed.³²

The Mormon-Jewish relationship was often overshadowed by more pressing matters prior to WWI, but instances of Mormon support and interest in Jews existed beyond scriptures. In fact, Joseph Smith's nephew, Hyrum, described "Jews . . . suffering great persecutions" the day before his untimely death in 1841 — he was seven years old and claimed a Jew was "thrown into prison because a cat was missing."³³ On a less somber note, there was excitement in 1858 regarding "hopeful

³⁰ Joseph Smith, "Articles of Faith," in *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1981), 61; *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, loc. 12241, Kindle Edition.

³¹ *Ibid.*, loc. 11039, Kindle Edition.

³² Arnold H. Green, "A Survey of LDS Proselytizing Efforts to the Jewish People," *Brigham Young University Studies* vol. 8, no. 4 (Summer 1968): 430, 431.

³³ Hyrum Smith, journal entry, 22 September 1841, accessed on 29 May 2020, www.josephsmithpapers.org.

spirit of inquiry” both locally and internationally amongst the Jewish people, and “[m]any pleasing instances of conversion” were reported.³⁴ There were also instances in both histories that showed a mutual support for one another. For example, in 1864, a Jewish newspaper not only opposed remarks made against the Mormons but also took that moment to embrace their shared experiences, including “prejudice, bigotry and persecution,” especially at the hands of Christians.³⁵ Several years later, Mormons returned the favor when an article stated, “[t]he way for Jews to escape persecution [was] to cease being Jews”; the LDS acknowledged similar attacks lobbed against them before noting that, even if a Jew gave up their religion, “he would still belong to Judah” and he would still be an “object of derision, aversion or persecution” by the same “bigots and bogus “Christians.””³⁶

The Latter-day Saint relationship with Jews was never unpleasant, as they believed they were “literal or adopted descendants of scattered Israel,” but it did not develop significantly beyond the numerous dedications and rededications of Palestine “for the Jewish return” until World War I; these continued demonstrations, at the very least, showed “continuing LDS interest in the Jewish return” and encouraged the proselytizing of God’s chosen people.³⁷ As the War was consuming much of the developed world, Mormons were campaigning for Utah gubernatorial candidate Simon Bamberger, a German Jew. The *Salt Lake Tribune* published a column that attributed “literature, the arts, and commerce” to the ancestors of Jews and advocated for a change from voting based on “Mormons or non-Mormons” to one that considered “American citizenship” and the interest of the people first.³⁸ By the end of the Great War, the British and their allies had seized control of Jerusalem to which it was claimed

³⁴ “Inquiry Among the Jews!” *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), Deseret News Archives, 29 December 1858.

³⁵ “More Slanders Refuted,” *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), Deseret News Archives, 20 April 1864.

³⁶ “A Wide Difference,” *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), Deseret News Archives, 6 April 1881.

³⁷ Arnold H. Green, “Jews in LDS Thought,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* vol. 34, no. 4 (1 Oct 1994): 140; Green, “A Survey of LDS Proselytizing Efforts to the Jewish People,” 430-431.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 431; “Strong Tribute Paid,” *Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City), accessed on 1 June 2020, www.newspapers.com

“with the exception of the Jews,” no other people “have more cause for rejoicing . . . than do the Latter-day Saints.”³⁹ A literary campaign for Jewish conversion was attempted in the early 1930s and, although it was not necessarily successful, it marked the first major attempt to use “Mormon gospel especially for Jews.”⁴⁰ From there, the Mormon-Jewish proselytizing efforts continued to increase and become more talked about. With the exception of a controversial stint during the Holocaust and World War II, Latter-day Saints made the gathering of Israel and conversion of Jews a top priority.

Church membership surpassed the one million mark in 1953 despite an incredibly rocky beginning and only continued to grow from there. Mormon history was littered with controversy, from their very unpopular views regarding Native Americans and, initially, African Americans and slavery, to their shocking acceptance of polygamous practice and posthumous baptism, and from their demand for improved treatment of Jews who were “denied many of the privileges and the freedom enjoyed by other people” around the world, to their noticeable change from a diverse and colorful membership to one that was suddenly “too white,” they persevered.⁴¹ Recently, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claimed it was a “thoroughly integrated faith” due to their many inclusive practices and a diverse membership.⁴² Despite having “a revelation from God . . . to alter the policy” regarding men of “black African descent” becoming ordained, records of their demographics show that the Church is 85% white with the second largest race being Hispanics at 8% of the membership; black members only made up *one* percent.⁴³

In summary, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been a historically more inclusive denomination of American-brand Christianity in comparison

³⁹ Green, “A Survey of LDS Proselytizing Efforts to the Jewish People,” 431.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 432.

⁴¹ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, loc. 6348, Kindle Edition.

⁴² *Ibid*; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, *Race and the Priesthood*, accessed on 30 May 2020, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org>

⁴³ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, *Race and the Priesthood*; Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study: Mormons,” accessed on 26 May 2020, www.pewforum.org.

to others, especially in regards to the Jewish people. That was to say that they did not use the guise of religion to conquer lands and people but instead pursued a more organic proselytizing effort that enabled new followers, regardless of their demographic, to be empowered rather than disenfranchised by their Church. Perhaps it was due to the more modern revelation of their religion, but observers knew of and noted the “unique positive relationship which Mormons have had . . . with Jews.”⁴⁴ Their faith separated the world into two populations: the Jew and the Gentile. And, furthermore, followers of the Church look forward to the “literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes,” all of which are Jewish and considered to be God’s “chosen people.”⁴⁵ This significant connection to and prophetic perception of the Jewish faith and its people led one to believe that Latter-day Saints would absolutely want to protect their future by ensuring the survival of the Jewish race. Unfortunately, one would be sorely disappointed.

⁴⁴ Tobler, “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust,” 59.

⁴⁵ Joseph Smith, “Articles of Faith,” in *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1981), 61; Joseph Smith, letter to Noah C. Saxton, 4 January 1833, accessed 17 October 2016, josephsmithpapers.org.

Scholarly Review of Latter-day Saints during the Era of Nazism

There has been a tremendous amount of research and scholarly work completed in regards to nearly every facet of World War II. A person with even the most basic knowledge of the Second World War could describe the fundamental elements of the period, including the large-scale execution of Jewish people by Germany's Nazi forces as well as the involvement of opposition forces from Great Britain and the United States. However, a closer look would be required to unearth the more horrific details of this time period, both in Europe and abroad. The systematic persecution of the Jewish people was not unknown to the rest of the world, however unbelievable it may have been to most people. Unfortunately, the world remained largely silent while Hitler's "final solution" was carried out.

What appears most striking about this silence was that it was found in nearly all walks of life, including religious organizations who could have easily been next on Hitler's list of targets. Many leaders have since been exposed for turning a blind eye and even accused of collaborating with Nazis in the cover-up or actual persecution of the Jews and other minorities. For example, there were plenty of Catholics who acted in defense of those being persecuted but it was "without instruction from the Vatican" or Pope Pius XII.⁴⁶ In fact, he was accused of giving the "impression of stereotypical anti-Semitic contempt" by not directly addressing the persecution of Jews or holding Nazis accountable.⁴⁷ History of anti-Jewish sentiment within nearly all sects of Christianity was not necessarily a secret to the masses during Pius XII's reign, but criticism was still understandable and expected. However, there has also been at least one denomination that did not share a similar history of anti-Semitism: the Mormon religion.

⁴⁶ Susan Zuccotti, *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 243.

⁴⁷ John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 75; Zuccotti, *Under His Very Windows*, 308.

The very foundation of the Mormon religion in America was met with great skepticism and disdain in which observers categorized them with “Jews, Chinese,” as well as other religious minorities and races.⁴⁸ The initial marginalization of the Mormon religion was actually due to its inclusiveness — they were considered to be a “nationality more than skin color,” however they were defined as their own race — Mormons were “not securely white” in pre-abolition and through Civil Rights Act America, which was “employed by the white Protestant majority to . . . justify discriminatory policies against them.”⁴⁹ The historical parallels between the Mormons and Jews were uncanny, yet an American Mormon serving as president of a mission in Hitler’s Germany would stress the “numerous parallels between Mormonism and Naziism (sic)” instead.⁵⁰ The irony hardly begins with that individual, though, as American Mormons fought against *and* praised Nazi Mormons, and, at the conclusion of war, would attempt to pick up where they left off with their support of the Jewish people, including mass posthumous baptisms of exterminated Jews.

Although the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints made a plethora of newspapers, journal entries, and various other published materials from the Church and membership accessible, locating relevant secondary source material was difficult. Had the question simply been “Historically, what was the relationship between Mormons and Jews like?” One would have found themselves overwhelmed with books and articles to choose from. Initially, the topic seemed a little taboo, as the Holocaust has been an uncomfortable topic to discuss, but there were a few researchers willing to tackle the subject. Not surprisingly, a majority of the works found were authored by active Latter-day Saints that offered an array of feelings from excuses and criticisms to sympathies and even denial.

⁴⁸ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 223.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 3-4. The Mormons did not necessarily share any physical trait(s) that distinguished them from other American citizens so, while they were discriminated against and treated similarly to those of different races, they were categorized similarly to that of another nationality (i.e. Irish, German).

⁵⁰ David Conley Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika: Mormons in Nazi Germany* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 186.

When approaching the relationship the Mormons had with the Jews, all authors described an overwhelmingly positive history between the two sects prior to and after the Holocaust. A Brigham Young University Latter-day Saint historian (both in practice and profession), author David Boone make little effort in his works to recognize the more cringe-worthy moments the Church had with Hitler and instead chose to emphasize the survival and thriving that missionaries experienced during Nazi occupation; the Church undoubtedly approved of the message. He claims “Mormons faced continued harassment” despite having “pledged themselves loyal citizens” and accommodating the Nazis.⁵¹ While describing a Czechoslovak mission, he focuses on harassment from Gestapo who hoped to exploit the Church for money; the mission president told an agent he was “endangering one of [Germany’s] finest sources of income” by punishing Mormons since they brought in “10,000 to 15,000 dollars each month.”⁵² It should be noted that this amount was quite exaggerated. Nonetheless his statement implied that American money was being invested in the Third Reich. In regards to a German mission, Boone emphasizes how fortunate Mormon missionaries in Europe seemed to be, whether it was an operator allowing “one last wire” money transfer to go through or a German soldier and one-time student of elders giving stranded missionaries “a small roll of money” to help them evacuate.⁵³ He appears to be highlighting divine presence and intervention on behalf of these men and women rather than addressing the reasons for evacuation.

In “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust” another Mormon scholar, Douglas Tobler, provides researchers with a more realistic, albeit sympathetic, depiction of what he referred to as “Mormon indifference” as well as a some

⁵¹ David F. Boone, “The Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and West German Missions at the Outbreak of World War II,” *Brigham Young University Studies* vol. 40 no. 3 (2001): 122-154; Steve Carter, “The Rise of Nazi Dictatorship and its Relationship with the Mormon Church in Germany, 1933-1939,” *International Journal of Mormon Studies* vol. 3 (Spring 2010), 78.

⁵² Boone, “The Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and West German Missions at the Outbreak of World War II,” 129.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 139.

perspective on the anti-Semitism that was really a global phenomenon at the time.⁵⁴ He recognizes Mormons neglected to deal “fully with the human problems” of the time even if much of their membership was aware of the “physical extermination of . . . the Jewish people.”⁵⁵ Tobler appeared to offer several different excuses for the lack of action on the Mormons’ part, including the familiar references to their relatively small numbers, dedication to the Twelfth Article of Faith, and, at one point, he even suggested that rumors of Hitler *helping* the Jews relocate to Palestine had circulated.⁵⁶ Tobler makes a habit of addressing an instance of Jewish persecution and coupling it with examples of how accepted the Jews were in Utah or how “spiritual objectives” were prioritized and that “*both* Mormon and Jewish leaders” in Utah were not fully aware of the “scope and depth” of the atrocities being committed in Nazi-occupied areas.⁵⁷ Despite the compelling evidence he presented, Tobler expresses sympathy for the Mormons who, at the end of World War II, “learned with the rest of the world” just how catastrophic the Jewish Holocaust had been and then emphasized the Church’s reinvigorated effort to “support the Zionists” and “establish the State of Israel.”⁵⁸

World War II enthusiast and historian David Conley Nelson published his research in *Moroni and the Swastika*, a much more pointed and neutral view than the previous works. Nelson addresses some of the same sources as previously discussed scholars yet he did not stray away from pointing out the more cringe-worthy moments. For example, both Tobler and Nelson report on President J. Reuben Clark’s request to be “excused” from being asked to help emigrating Jews in 1939, but only Nelson acknowledged Clark’s pleas to help “Aryans” emigrate; Nelson also exposes Mormon leadership urging the United States government “not to help Jewish children

⁵⁴ Tobler, “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust,” 64.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 74.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 86.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 66-88.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 90.

to leave Nazi Germany.”⁵⁹ He criticizes the blanket excuses used by the Church and expressed hope that they may one day see themselves as “on the wrong side of history” at that time.⁶⁰ He even proposes that “a lesser degree of accommodation” probably would not have hurt the Mormon Church considering other religious minorities’ ability to survive the Nazis.⁶¹ What is missing is the self-serving history the Church had written and delivered to its membership, young and old alike for generations. If discrepancies are not pointed out then they are unlikely to be corrected. Again, this reveals a necessity to be less sympathetic and more critical of the Church and its membership, however with good intentions.

Most other works tip-toed around the Jewish question and instead elevated Mormon suffering and idolized individual members. Another Mormon scholar, Alan Keele, writes about a “Latter-day Saint man who joined . . . the SS, and then had a change of heart” whose identity was kept secret for the article.⁶² An inspiring story of conscience, Keele appeals to readers’ emotions when describing the unfortunate circumstances of Bruno’s youth — all of his siblings died young, his mother was widowed and depended heavily upon him — and further explained that the Latter-day Saints he was raised with actually “looked at him suspiciously” when he became an SS member.⁶³ The author insists that Bruno was simply trying to free himself “from a possessive mother” and actually did not have pro-Nazi sympathies, which was how he gathered the “courage to flee from it.”⁶⁴ After being captured, serving time in Dachau, and overcoming tuberculosis, Bruno returned to the Church and became a “one-hundred-percent-devoted Latter-day Saint” who the author describes as “a saintly, even beatific spirit.”⁶⁵ The author includes disturbing descriptions of SS who “threw a

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 81; Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 7; Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 7, 274.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 343.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 342.

⁶² Alan F. Keele, “A Latter-day Saint in Hitler’s SS: The True Story of a Mormon Youth Who Joined and Defected from the Infamous *SchutzStaffel*,” *Brigham Young University Studies* vol. 42, no. ¾ (2003): 21.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 21-24.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 28.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 27-28.

[Jewish] baby into the air and shot it” and Jewish people “stripped and their body cavities searched” before also being murdered yet skirts issues of Mormon anti-Semitism and accommodation within the Third Reich.⁶⁶ It is troubling to say the least.

In his work “The Rise of the Nazi Dictatorship and its Relationship with the Mormon Church in Germany, 1933-1939,” author Steve Carter highlights Church suffering. He explained how Nazis “launched a campaign against” Christianity and only tolerated those “deemed beneficial to party aims.”⁶⁷ The Latter-day Saints’ common ground with Nazis indicated they may be useful to the party, although Keele insisted that the “Church’s spiritual mission” was prioritized and members were “apolitical” yet “good and law-abiding citizens” to their governors.⁶⁸ The author offered *general* descriptions of targeting (i.e. Gestapo asking for lists of member names and monitoring meetings), the dissolution of their youth programs, and, interestingly, banning “The Articles of Faith.”⁶⁹ Although he likely did not intend to associate the Mormon Church with helping the Nazis, his description of their suffering and “illusion of harmonious relations” fails to be convincing as he literally concludes “Mormons did not endure . . . persecution suffered by other religions.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 26.

⁶⁷ Steve Carter, “The Rise of the Nazi Dictatorship and its Relationship with the Mormon Church in Germany, 1933-1939,” *International Journal of Mormon Studies* vol. 3, (Spring 2010): 56.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 57-58.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 59-62.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 66, 78.

II. Research

Nazi-Occupation, Christian Dilemma

It has been common practice to look back at events in history and place responsibility on one party or another. When an event as horrific and appalling as the Jewish Holocaust of the twentieth century has been researched and discussed, the blame game has been over-simplified and the immediate response to *how did this happen* has been met with one resounding answer: Hitler. While it has been easy to associate the name of Hitler with the Holocaust, for he was largely responsible, the lack of responsibility accepted by those, particularly those of the Christian faith, who were either witness to or aware of the events that took place has been jarring and disturbing. Historians have attempted to argue that the world at large was not aware of the atrocities that took place; even those who had concentration camps in their backyard were somehow not aware of the mass murders being committed. However, those claims have not withstood the test of time as plenty of evidence shows that many *did* know about these death camps and the systematic extermination of the Jewish people. Still, many researchers continue to submit a plethora of excuses for why nothing could have been done even if people may have known what was going on. Among the most popular of these excuses were statements such as those who had knowledge or concerns were “few in number and powerless” or “they saw themselves unable to make a difference.”⁷¹

The Holocaust was about race and, more importantly, the destruction of a perceived evil, parasitic race — the Jews — coupled with the growth and preservation of the perceived superior race — the Aryans. As stated time and again, Hitler, a dark-haired, dark-eyed Austrian, fell into neither of these categories yet led the charge with little opposition. Painting the Jewish race as the enemy was not surprising or even creative as it has been one of the most persecuted and oppressed groups of people in

⁷¹ Tobler, “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust,” 64.

history, perhaps second only to Africans, and over half of their population lived in Europe.⁷² Consequently, anti-Semitic sentiment was prevalent in nearly every country and Christian denomination. Although Christianity had little to do with Hitler's perfect Aryan race, the erasure of the Jewish race and, by default, their religion was a top priority. Of course, it has been acknowledged that several other marginalized groups, like gypsies, homosexuals, and the handicapped, were also transported to and murdered in concentration camps during Hitler's reign, but none in numbers comparable to the Jewish people.

The targeting of a people defined by their religious affiliation should have posed a threat to all religious organizations, yet the leadership of the predominantly Christian world was ominously silent. The relationship between Judaism and Christianity has been drenched in controversy since the death of Jesus in the New Testament, an event most Christians held the Jews responsible for until recently. Still, the targeting of a *religion*-defined race should have raised some alarm as Hitler and many Nazi leaders were non-denominational, some leaders, like Alfred Rosenberg, were staunch anti-Catholics whereas others, like the infamous Joseph Goebbels, were adamantly anti-church and desired disenfranchisement or, at least, subversive status of religious institutions to the state. In fact, several Christian denominations, including Catholics, were among those persecuted throughout Hitler's reign, though not consistently or in large quantities. Of all the religious organizations in Germany, the only notable sect that publicly opposed the fascist leader was the Jehovah's Witnesses; they were subsequently hunted down, placed in concentration camps, and had their religion banned. Their bravery has thus served as a rebuttal to the many excuses of religious leaders as to why their church did not openly condemn the Holocaust or otherwise attempt to assist its victims.

Similar to the Jehovah's Witnesses, there were several small American sects of Christianity in Germany by 1933. Among them were the Seventh-Day Adventists,

⁷² Pew Research Center, "The Continuing Decline of Europe's Jewish Population," 9 February 2015, accessed on 12 November 2016, www.pewresearch.org.

Christian Scientists, the Salvation Army, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more commonly referred to as Mormons. The latter of these sects has been discussed far less than most other Christian denominations, especially in regards to the role it played during the Holocaust, despite its exceptionally well-documented history. Contrary to the majority of their Christian counterparts, the Mormon religion did not share in a history of anti-Semitism; rather it fully embraced Christianity's Jewish heritage, believed the Jews were God's "chosen people" and insisted Christ would not return until their regathering in the Holy Land. So while it seemed likely for the Mormons to take up the defense of their Jewish neighbors in some capacity, their "ominously silent" reaction aligned them with the Christian community like never before.⁷³

Historians that have visited the relationship between Mormons and Jews have made the standard excuses regarding their silence and inactivity during the Holocaust. However, many Latter Day Saints were actively involved with the National Socialist party or practicing various facets of its ideology, including the oppression of the Jewish people. Furthermore, church leadership knew of the concerns many European Saints had for their Jewish neighbors yet offered little or no direction on how to proceed. *Rather than acknowledge their role in Jewish oppression, Mormons overemphasized their suffering and survival as well as touted doctrinal support for nationalism during the Holocaust and World War II in order to justify members' actions and lack thereof.* The Church's recollection of its events during World War II has not even mentioned the atrocities of the Holocaust and the slaughter of God's "ancient covenant people"; Mormon history merely alluded to this event as "the Nazi's anti-Jewish policy" and focused instead on the miraculous evacuation of American missionaries, Saints in military service, as well as the survival, suffering, growth, and even "favorable

⁷³ Joseph Smith, letter to Noah C. Saxton; Tobler, "The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust," 63.

publicity” that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints achieved in Nazi-occupied Europe.⁷⁴

“Jude Verbote” and Erasing Zion

To better understand the implications of Mormons’ silence during the Holocaust, some historical context is needed. From their religion’s foundation, Mormons were considerably more inclusive than their American Christian counterparts. Rather than conforming to practices of religious intervention for ulterior motives, Mormons accommodated and accepted followers from nearly every race and background they encountered. However, this inclusiveness combined with a controversial origin and odd practices contributed greatly to the skepticism, persecution and marginalization the new religion was met with by fellow Americans. Out-casted amongst the “Jews, Chinese,” and other minorities, Joseph Smith and his followers were heavily persecuted and harassed in their own backyard.⁷⁵ Although they struggled for acceptance and to be taken seriously, the faith prospered, embracing their differences and diversity with few exceptions; as the *Book of Mormon* stated, regardless of race, sex, status, Jew or Gentile, “He denieth none that come unto Him.”⁷⁶

The *Book of Mormon* and the “Articles of Faith” have been the underpinnings of the Latter-day Saints’ faith since the time of its founding by the prophet Joseph Smith. As previously mentioned, the Mormons have had a “unique positive relationship . . . with Jews.”⁷⁷ Like much of Christian scripture the *Book of Mormon*

⁷⁴ Mormon, *The Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 29:4, trans. Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 2013), 110; *Church History in the Fulness of Times: Student Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 2003), loc. 15184, 15192, Kindle Edition.

⁷⁵ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 3-4, 223.

⁷⁶ Mormon, *The Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 26:33, 103-104.

⁷⁷ Tobler, “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust,” 59.

divided the population into “Jew and Gentile.”⁷⁸ However the Mormons’ God was considerably critical of the Gentiles’ relationship with the Jewish people. He exposed the ills, “the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews” and how the Gentile had “cursed them . . . hated them, and not sought to recover them;” He then confronted Mormon and asked, “have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?”⁷⁹ Perhaps it was from this maltreatment that God bestowed upon the Mormons their Tenth Article of Faith, which links the destiny of the Mormons and Jesus’ return to the “literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes,” all of which were Jewish.⁸⁰ In 1921, Church President Heber J. Grant, who served the entirety of the Holocaust and World War II, delivered a speech at the Latter-day Saints’ General Conference — it was transcribed, printed and circulated among the entirety of the membership, at home and abroad, including in Germany — urging Mormons not to be found “guilty of taking any part in any crusade against [Jewish] people.”⁸¹ He further declared that “in no other part of the world [was] there as good a feeling in the hearts of mankind towards the Jewish people” than with the Mormon people.⁸² That same man with the help of his colleagues in the First Presidency of the Church, encouraged the membership to “become close-mouthed during the Nazi years.”⁸³

In 1932, Mormon leaders held their bi-annual conference and Elder James Moyle excitedly told of his recent opportunities to “preach to the Jews in their synagogues,” emphasizing their eagerness to learn about Mormonism and discuss the “Relationship of Mormonism to Judaism.”⁸⁴ He demonstrated numerous parallels between the publication of the *Book of Mormon* and the improved treatment of Jews around the world — he claimed that they were “denied many of the privileges and the

⁷⁸ Mormon, *The Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 26:33, 104.

⁷⁹ Mormon, *The Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 29:4-6, 110.

⁸⁰ Joseph Smith, “Articles of Faith,” 61.

⁸¹ “Concerning the Jews,” Ninety-First Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (1921), LDS Archives, 124.

⁸² “Concerning the Jews,” Ninety-First Annual Conference, 124.

⁸³ Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, *The Price: The True Story of a Mormon who Defied Hitler* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1984), 39.

⁸⁴ Elder James H. Moyle, Conference Report, April 1932, 12.

freedom enjoyed by other people” — as well as their “restoration in Palestine.”⁸⁵ Both sects certainly had several uncanny parallels, including a history of “discriminatory policies against them,” yet when it was arguably the most critical time to acknowledge, an American Mormon serving as a mission president in Hitler’s Germany stressed the “numerous parallels between Mormonism and Nazism” instead.⁸⁶ There were approximately 12,000-15,000 Latter Day Saints in Germany by 1933 and hundreds of missions throughout Europe. Like most other Christian denominations associated with America, Mormons “were warned to stay out of political matters” by Gestapo agents.⁸⁷ Initially, the Mormon church came under harsh scrutiny for its known references to Jewish heritage and undeniably positive relationship with the Jewish community. Aside from several Mormons being converted Jews, their Church doctrines were littered with Zion and Israel — the *Doctrine and Covenants* includes 127 Israel and 303 Zion references, the *Book of Mormon* has 62 Zion and 418 Israel references, the *Pearl of Great Price* has 23 Zion and 16 Israel references, and one of the Church’s most popular hymn books was literally called *The Songs of Zion*.⁸⁸ Well before the invasion of Poland, concerns for the well-being of mission members were being circulated throughout the Church and leadership. Due to the increasingly militarized state, members appeared to collectively echo the sentiment of German Mormons Karl-Heinz Schnibbe and, previously, Rose Ellen Valentine who correctly declared “war is inevitable.”⁸⁹

As the National Socialist Party came into power, “official Mormon policy was to “get along” with the Hitler regime,” although their historical records certainly indicated they went above and beyond any necessary means for survival. Leaders of the Church began courting the Nazis by describing the various similarities between the

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 3-4; Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 186.

⁸⁷ *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, loc. 15187, Kindle Ed.

⁸⁸ Counts are directly from respective documents: Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*; Mormon, *Book of Mormon*; Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *The Songs of Zion* (Chicago: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1908).

⁸⁹ Schnibbe, *The Price*, 21. Rose Valentine Diary in Swiss and German Mission Manuscript History, 25-26 July 1914.

two organizations.⁹⁰ For example, in the ever-popular Mormon newspaper, *Deseret News*, an article was published in late 1933 called “Mormonism in the New Germany” that told of a “number of interesting parallels . . . between the church . . . and National Socialism.”⁹¹ The article explained the “noticeable trend in the “Mormon” direction” that Hitler demonstrated, namely his physical health, as well as the critical interest in genealogical work the Nazi party shared with Latter-day Saints.⁹² Considering the “importance of the racial question” Mormons suddenly recognized the “necessity of proving one’s grandmother was not a Jewess;” curiously enough, the previous use of the records was for discovering one’s potential lineage in *hopes* that it may have been rooted in one of the “Ten Tribes.”⁹³ (A little over a decade earlier, the *Deseret News* was declared “the organ of the Church and . . . entitled to the support of all Israel” by Church President Heber J. Grant.⁹⁴) As time went on and the Nazis continued to interact with Latter-day Saints, mission leaders further demonstrated their condoning of party practices claiming “members of the church [were] subject to Kings, Presidents, Rulers, Magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the laws of the land,” an almost verbatim recital of the Twelfth Article of Faith.⁹⁵

The support of nationalism has been critical to the Mormon recollection of their membership during World War II. The Church’s student manual on “Church History in the Fulness of Times” was written with an entire chapter dedicated to Saints in World War II without a single mention of the Holocaust, though they did make one reference to the “Nazis’ anti-Jewish policies” — the *only* reference to Jews in the chapter.⁹⁶ Without acknowledging the more negative aspects of the time period, the Church emphasized “the blessings of the Lord” during the incredibly successful

⁹⁰ Tobler, “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust,” 77.

⁹¹ “Mormonism in the New Germany,” *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), 9 December 1933, *Deseret News Archives*.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ “The *Deseret News*” Commended,” Ninety-First Annual Conference, LDS Archives, 43.

⁹⁵ German-Austrian Mission Manuscript History (1925-38), LDS Archives, 7 September 1933.

⁹⁶ “Chapter Forty: The Saints during World War II,” *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, Kindle Ed.

evacuation of *every* American missionary from Europe followed by the growth of “faithful adherence to Church doctrines and procedures.”⁹⁷ The Church encouraged and celebrated military service, regardless if members were fighting for Hitler or Roosevelt, emphasizing dedication to the Twelfth Article of Faith, which outlined a Mormon’s duty to their national leader.

Strangely, as Church history shows, all copies of the “Articles of Faith” were seized by the Nazi Party for its “references to Israel and Zion.”⁹⁸ That critical text being one of the most obvious indications of their historical relationship to the Jewish people, the Mormons would have had to rewrite or, at the very least, dismiss a significant element of their religion in order to achieve harmony within Nazi Germany. Although this was one of the ways in which they claimed to “suffer” at the hands of the Third Reich, some of the missions “removed the words “Jews, Israel, Zion, a promised land, our relationship with the Jews, etc.” before Nazis even had the chance to object.⁹⁹ It appeared they were all too eager to relieve themselves of a Jewish connection and any associated responsibilities. At a 1933 conference, Mormon leader Elder Melvin Ballard ironically started his speech, “[w]e love our brothers the Jews,” and shortly followed with, “the hand of oppression seems still reared against [Jews] in Germany, and there seems to be no peace for them.”¹⁰⁰ His words seemed like a strange pairing, yet they echoed a new Mormon sentiment inspired by Hitler-brand anti-Semitism, which found it was ultimately the Jews’ fault they were being persecuted as God had “appointed a place for them, and if they do not go willingly they will go otherwise.”¹⁰¹ That being said, even if it were true for other groups of people, the excuse that very few Mormons were aware of the horrific events taking place during this time could not be effectively argued by the Church.

⁹⁷ *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, loc. 15271, 15293, Kindle Ed.

⁹⁸ *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, loc. 15195, Kindle Ed.

⁹⁹ Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 204.

¹⁰⁰ Elder Melvin J. Ballard, Conference Report, October 1933, 6.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

What may have been one of the most interesting and, frankly, bizarre occurrences in the Church's history was their enthusiastic celebration of one of their own, Helmuth Hübener: a young man who actively *resisted* Hitler and the Nazi Party. Hübener was the leader of a three-member resistance group — all Mormons — that, for nearly nine months, distributed anti-Nazi leaflets based on British Broadcasting Company (BBC) radio news reports the young man heard over his outlawed shortwave radio.¹⁰² Helmuth Hübener, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, and Rudolph "Rudi" Wobbe were arrested and punished by the Gestapo, their young leader and future Mormon martyr received the worst of the sentencing; Hübener was the "youngest boy to be executed for his opposition to the Third Reich," beheaded in 1942 at the age of seventeen.¹⁰³ Schnibbe and Wobbe, have both published their experiences in Nazi Germany but they described a much darker history than has been officially recognized by the Church. Missions were not meant to be "a political meeting" place declared several of the local members of Schnibbe, Hübener, and Wobbe's church yet, in 1939, prior to the invasion of Poland, a sign appeared on the church's door that read "Jews Are Not Allowed To Enter!"¹⁰⁴

Suddenly, even long-term members and converts were no longer admitted into Mormon churches if there was any knowledge or suspicion of Jewish heritage. Furthermore, they were denied any assistance from their American leadership as J. Reuben Clark, the second in command, "asked to be "excused" from taking action" on suspect-Jews' behalf and encouraged them instead to seek out assistance from Jewish organizations. He did, however, request U.S. State Department assistance in the "emigration of non-Jewish . . . Mormons," which he often referred to as "Aryans."¹⁰⁵ What was worse and hardly believable was Clark's other inquiry urging the United

¹⁰² Schnibbe, *The Price*, 30-31. See also: Rudi Wobbe and Jerry Borrowman, *Three Against Hitler: A compelling true story of three LDS teens' fight for freedom* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, Inc., 2002), location 591, Kindle Edition.

¹⁰³ "Nazi poster reveals execution of teenager who listened to BBC," *The Telegraph*, 28 September 2010, accessed on 30 November 2016, www.telegraph.co.uk.

¹⁰⁴ Schnibbe, *The Price*, 39; Wobbe and Borrowman, *Three Against Hitler*, loc. 460, Kindle Ed. See also: Schnibbe, *The Price*, 23.

¹⁰⁵ Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 6.

States government “not to help Jewish children to leave Nazi Germany.”¹⁰⁶ All things considered thus far, the Church has offered misleading and oversimplified information, and, in many regards, omitted facts about its role in the Holocaust despite a well-documented history of pro-Jewish sentiment before and after Hitler’s time.

Contrary to the blanket excuses often made by the Church, concentration camp survivor Karl-Heinz Schnibbe recalled that the German people, including the Mormon population, “all experienced the euthanasia campaign” since, as early as 1939, the “Nazis had begun to kill the handicapped.”¹⁰⁷ He further explained that “all knew about Buchenwald and the other . . . concentration camps,” a statement echoed by many Holocaust and World War II survivors. It was also widely known amongst missions that “human life became a very cheap commodity in Nazi Germany” and there was a legal death penalty for “enemies of the state” that resulted in imprisonment, which Wobbe and Schnibbe were sentenced to, and, in the case of Hübener, executions.¹⁰⁸ Of course, his testimony was hardly needed as the *Deseret News* published the celebrated Jewish “sympathizer,” President Heber J. Grant, “seated in front of a large Swastika” at the same time columns were published depicting the “persecution that Germany’s Jews were experiencing.”¹⁰⁹

In 1936, Mormon leaders broadcasted their disdain for religious intolerance and later had the speech published in their popular circular, *Millennial Star*. They believed that it was “not within the province of any church to persecute a man because of his belief” and they assured followers that those persecuted because of their religion “may know that it [was] not of God.” The speaker continued to say that anywhere specific worship was denied, “by any *government* or any church,” was contrary to free agency, which was considered a divine right by Latter-day Saints. One of the more compelling statements was that “...force, oppression, unrighteous dominion, coercion, find no place and cannot be tolerated; for they are diametrically

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 274.

¹⁰⁷ Schnibbe, *The Price*, 35.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 34.

¹⁰⁹ Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 11.

opposed to the very foundation principles of free agency and common consent upon which the Church rests.”¹¹⁰ The speakers’ presentation while empowering was nothing short of hypocritical to their stance on the condition and treatment of the Jewish people in Germany that same year.

The previously mentioned radio broadcast was produced several years prior to the early stages of the Nazis’ “Final Solution” plan. Although attacks on German Jews had already been in progress at the time of the broadcast, it was arguable that their ultimate fate was not yet imaginable. By late 1940, however, the world was immersed in the Second World War and knew of the pointed persecution of European Jews; in America, *Time* magazine had numerous articles and columns that addressed sterilization, *Kristallnacht*, and other forms of persecution being carried out on the Jewish population.¹¹¹ So, in what may have been some of the most accurate, albeit unfortunate, foreshadowing, Elder Levi Young attempted to encourage the idea of “faith overcomes fear” at the 1940 bi-annual conference.¹¹² He stated the “Jews were in the furnace of affliction, but they were not afraid” in reference to a biblical story of *resistance* (of all things) to Nebuchadnezzar, a merciless, Hitler-esque conqueror of ancient Jewish tribes.¹¹³ Young excitedly concluded the story of these men whom “the fire had no power upon” as a “lesson for the martyrs of the day in which we live!”¹¹⁴ Only hours later, Elder Sylvester Cannon stood before the congregation and, somewhat ironically, commented on the “low birthrate of the modern Jew . . . world-wide,” referring to it as “a challenge . . . to what the Latter-day Saints, who are faithful in the observance of this eternal covenant, represent in comparison with,” essentially, every other religious sect; this was meant as a testimony to the Mormons’ belief that

¹¹⁰ Elder Arthur Winter, “The Free Agency of Man,” *Millennial Star* (Manchester, Liverpool), Oct. 8, 1936, accessed on 17 March 2020, www.archive.org. *Emphasis is my own.

¹¹¹ Lily Rothman, “‘It’s Not That the Story Was Buried.’ What Americans in the 1930s Really Knew About What Was Happening in Germany,” *Time* (New York, NY), Jul. 10, 2018, accessed on 11 May 2020, www.time.com

¹¹² Elder Levi Edgar Young, Conference Report, October 1940, 30.

¹¹³ Elder Levi Edgar Young, Conference Report, October 1940, 30.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

they were the people God chose to do “His work, the restoration of the Gospel in these days.”¹¹⁵ The conference was rife with these types of pats on the back.

At the same conference, Latter-day Saint leader David McKay gave an impassioned speech condemning dictatorships of warring European nations, stating the most significant issue of the day was “liberty and freedom of choice, or oppression and subjugation for the individual and for nations.”¹¹⁶ He then went on to encourage Mormons “to resist at all costs any and all attempts to curtail our liberties,” quite contradictory to the sentiment expressed years earlier to European chapters.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, many of the statements made by McKay echoed those of leaders in the Jehovah’s Witnesses, whose European members were also being targeted and persecuted alongside the Jews. McKay stressed that in order to transition from “the kingdoms of this world” to the “kingdoms of our God,” Christians needed to take action and “accept as facts and not as theories [God’s] moral and spiritual teachings” as well as embrace “kindness and thoughtfulness for others” in lieu of selfishness, “aggressively defend the principles of true liberty,” and make “honest relations and justice . . . the daily practice of society.”¹¹⁸ Despite his emphasis on humanity and fairness, McKay expressed joy and said, “in those countries that have been invaded not one of our members . . . has lost his life or been injured,” a significant comment that indicated he no longer considered those with, or suspected of, Jewish heritage that had been arrested as part of the European missions. He concluded by reminiscing on several messages already delivered at the conference from which “tolerance and love permeated every sentence.”¹¹⁹

Unfortunately, Mormon members not only “donned the brown shirts of Hitler’s . . . SA,” they also became members of the SS, “install[ed] specialized machinery” (i.e. “gas chambers and crematoria”), as well as “murdered and tortured Hitler’s political

¹¹⁵ Elder Sylvester Q. Cannon, Conference Report, October 1940, 32.

¹¹⁶ President David O. McKay, Conference Report, October 1940, 43.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

opponents.”¹²⁰ It should be noted that their service was not necessarily met with appreciation. Several Latter-day Saints “reported general ridicule,” some “faced outright harassment” and others were “denied promotion” due to their faith despite fulfilling duties of a loyal citizen.¹²¹ Nazi leaders “feared that . . . ties to an American religion” indicated the member “could be a spy.”¹²² Nazi party members demonstrated their distrust for German Mormons throughout the War, including numerous attempts to have Mormons denounce their faith or, at the very least, their positions within the church in order to hold positions in the party or service to their country (i.e. teacher, government official, etc.).¹²³ Bombing raids also took a toll on whole communities, making the assessment that like “other Germans, Mormons suffered,” which was a fair statement so long as it was not inflated beyond that.¹²⁴ While their afflictions certainly existed Mormons’ hardship was *considerably light* compared to those who suffered either directly or indirectly at their hands.

The idea of “Mormon indifference” likely existed but not to the extent that they actually were incapable of “dealing fully with the human problems” the Holocaust presented.¹²⁵ Mormon Mission President Roy Welker was publicly quoted in 1937 saying “Jews are safer in Germany today than in many other parts of the world”; he claimed that the Jews were being segregated but were “treated well otherwise” and those saying differently were just spreading “propaganda against [Germany].”¹²⁶ In Elder Welker’s personal diary, however, he wrote of a Jewish woman’s “stories of the government’s *persecution* of the Jews” by which he was “surprised and shocked” — this entry was from 1934.¹²⁷ A nineteen year old was sent to perform for German

¹²⁰ Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 5, 15.

¹²¹ Carter, “Patriotism and Resistance, Brotherhood and Bombs,” 24.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6. *Carter said the “Mormons suffered *greatly*,” which, given the evidence presented, was quite inflated.

¹²⁵ Tobler, “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust,” 64.

¹²⁶ “Europe War Scares Discounted: L.D.S. Officers Tell Of Nazi Desire To Prevent Strife,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 Sept 1937, 17, accessed on 29 May 2020, www.newspapers.com

¹²⁷ Tobler, “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust,” 82. *Emphasis is my own.

soldiers in occupied Poland in 1942 where she recalled traveling through the Jewish ghetto of Posen. She admitted that she had been “indoctrinated by Hitler and had certain feelings about the Jews” therefore she “did not see the suffering of the people, nor did [she] want to.”¹²⁸ Like so many others at the time, this young Mormon girl did not *want* to see the suffering and she was able to admit that yet her Church as a whole was not. Rather, “on the eve of the Jewish crisis in Germany,” sympathizers have focused on the “compatible relationship” between Jews and Latter-day Saints in Utah or the anti-Semitism experienced “in all too many American communities” other than the Mormons’ own.¹²⁹

Another American Religion in the Third Reich: the Jehovah’s Witnesses

There were stark differences between the actions of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Latter-day Saints in Nazi-occupied Europe in spite of several similar experiences in their foundation. As American-born religions, both sects experienced heavy persecution, discrimination, and even ridicule from their country’s leaders, media, and major religious groups, especially the Catholics. Zion’s Watch Tower Tract Society, later known as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, was founded around the same time Latter-day Saints’ membership reached one hundred thousand. Witnesses had a doomsday outlook, believing that the end of the world could happen at any time and many events, especially war, were indicators of the impending Armageddon. Like the Mormons, they were considered more of a fringe religion than a sect of Christianity for their rejection of the trinity, specifically their shared belief that God and Jesus were not the same. Witnesses believed that Satan ruled the Earth for the time being in order to give humans the choice of accepting and following God or, essentially, being

¹²⁸ Roger P. Minert, *Under the Gun: West German and Austrian Latter-Day Saints in World War II* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2012), 92, Deseret Book edition.

¹²⁹ Tobler, “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust,” 68.

damned to suffer through evil. Despite the lack of a cheery message the Witnesses were incredibly successful in their efforts to spread their interpretations of scripture.

While Mormon and Witness messages differed both churches emphasized door-to-door proselytizing and international mission work as main forms of advertisement and recruitment. They also both used the word “Jehovah” — Witnesses applauded themselves and others who utilized “original Hebrew” in their scripture translations.¹³⁰ Despite being apolitical, the Witnesses shared in the fight for religious tolerance and acceptance alongside the Mormons, both having tremendous effects on the United States legal system, especially constitutional law. Truth be told, Witnesses did not care much for any other religious sect, yet they used others’ tribulations to condemn their neighbors, the Catholics, and the American government in general, in order to gain validation as a minority religion. Using the Mormons as an example, Jehovah’s Witnesses published numerous columns that painted Americans as “barbarous, cruel, narrow-minded” and otherwise unfair to alternative forms of Christianity.¹³¹ In widely circulated periodicals, they claimed that “[n]ot since . . . Mormons were so atrociously treated” had a religious organization “been so terribly persecuted as” Jehovah’s Witnesses were and, in another edition, the violence committed against them was “unparalleled since the attacks on the Mormons.”¹³² Most of the Witnesses’ feelings towards Mormons were particularly critical and, other than a few foundational similarities, the most compelling similarity between the two religions was their relationship with the Jewish people.

Jehovah’s Witnesses also considered Jews to be God’s covenant people, but, different from the Mormons, they believed that Jewish leaders (i.e. priests, clergy) failed their followers and succumbed to the Devil, which led to a life of infidelity and disregard for God. However, the Jehovah's Witnesses also believed in the same prophecy regarding the Jews being reunited with the Holy Land (i.e. Palestine/Israel)

¹³⁰ “President Roosevelt Comforts Jehovah’s witnesses (sic),” *Consolation*, 1938, 3.

¹³¹ “Supreme Court Denies Freedom of Conscience,” *Consolation*, 1940, 6. See also “Religion in the Public Schools,” *Consolation*, 1943, 28.

¹³² “Let Freedom Ring,” *Consolation*, 1942, 19; “Notanda,” *Consolation*, 1941, 2.

and were especially encouraging of any progress in that realization.¹³³ In relation to the rise of Hitler, Witness publications as early as 1933 described the Jews as God's chosen "people by whom He would teach other lessons of great importance"; this statement was found in various forms of media throughout the existence of the organization without hesitation even during the Holocaust and World War II.¹³⁴

Although several other religious organizations, including the Latter-day Saints, utilized the Old Testament with its numerous references to the Jews, the Jehovah's Witnesses considered themselves otherworldly in a way, claiming they were the definitive Christians "made up of those who have come from Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and those outside of all religious organizations."¹³⁵ In terms of actions taken during Nazi rise and occupation, however, this was largely where the similarities between the Witnesses and Mormons ended.

Purple Triangles — The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses and Nazism

During Hitler's rise to power and throughout the Holocaust and World War II, the Jehovah's Witnesses were under constant scrutiny yet, unlike so many other religious groups, they refused to conform or accommodate. Sections 135-141 of the Weimar Constitution outlined religious rights of German citizens, which were technically in effect throughout Hitler's reign (1933-1945). However, the Reichstag Fire Decree and Enabling Act of 1933 essentially amended the Constitution to relieve citizens of their civil liberties and, respectively, empower Hitler to enact a multitude of discriminatory laws. Despite a rocky foundation of their religion in the United States, there were multiple instances of American government intervention on the behalf of Witnesses as their property was seized illegally by the National Socialists, and, until the

¹³³ J. F. Rutherford, *Comfort for the Jews* (Brooklyn: International Bible Students Association, 1925), 126; See also: Rutherford, "Religious Intolerance: Why", *Golden Age*, 1933, 709-717.

¹³⁴ Rutherford, "Religious Intolerance: Why", *Golden Age*, 1933, 709-717.

¹³⁵ Rutherford, *Fascism or Freedom* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society International Bible Students Association, 1939), 25.

start of World War II, this American strong-arming was actually quite effective. Unfortunately, that was not the only hindrance between Nazis and Witnesses. As a group that refused to serve or support the military in any capacity as well as one that refrained from any form of political participation, the Witnesses were perceived as incredibly suspicious in the eyes of Nazis and so continued to be targeted and oppressed. Like many other groups of “undesirables,” Jehovah’s Witnesses were rounded up and sent to their deaths in concentration camps.

Multiple instances of the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses were recorded and published throughout the period to no avail. As early as 1934, the most prominent of Witness publications addressed the “effort to kill Jehovah’s Witnesses” by the Nazis yet was met with deafening silence. In the same text earlier that year, the text read “those who willingly persecute Jehovah’s witnesses . . . are now marking themselves for the slaughter that shall come”; of course, he was referring to divine judgment as the Axis power’s defeat was still over a decade away.¹³⁶ The doomsday-like attitude of the Jehovah’s Witnesses also made for more lighthearted addresses as well. According to one Watchtower contributor, there were 6,000 Witnesses in Nazi-occupied Europe, yet they were deemed “happy” and “blessed” because they “suffer for righteousness’ sake.”¹³⁷ Their staunch dedication to their faith made it impossible to ignore them, and, even in work camps, “one of their most distinctive characteristics was their constant attempt to convert anyone with whom they had contact,” which was looked at unfavorably and perhaps contributed to their “isolation from the other prisoners.”¹³⁸ The SS “despised and yet trusted the Witnesses and missed no opportunity to use them,” including when a razor-shave was needed, yet the accepted view was “that the sect was ‘Jewish’ and part of a ‘world conspiracy’; even so, Reich leadership was well-aware that “the Witnesses had no pro-Jewish sympathies.”¹³⁹

¹³⁶ “Lions’ Mouths,” *The Watchtower*, Dec. 1, 1934, 360; “Hope,” *The Watchtower*, Jan. 1, 1934, 9.

¹³⁷ “Desire for Life in the New World,” *The Watchtower*, Apr. 1, 1943, 106

¹³⁸ King, “Strategies for Survival,” 217.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 220.

Jehovah Witnesses regularly tested the patience of their state's occupiers and published article after article, never missing an opportunity to expose the atrocities being committed. One Witness described an event from Dublin in which a Jewish dentist was evicted by his landlady simply for being Jewish and the appeal denied because "her anti-Semitism "was notoriously shared by a number of other citizens."" The author made the astute observation that such an "unjust ruling" would easily lead to the dispossession of anyone's property based on their beliefs.¹⁴⁰ Another Witness wrote that Nazis claimed "commanding positions in German industry [were] held by Jews whose motives [were] grounded wholly in selfish interests," yet, he believed, "if Negroes were as numerous and progressive in Germany as the Jews, then the Hitlerites would direct their shafts against" them instead.¹⁴¹ It should be noted that the Jehovah's Witnesses were by no means supporters of 'equality for all' by today's standards. Still, their words and actions indicated that they were against blatant mistreatment of minorities by their government and other "Christians" — judgment was for God and God only to decide, everything else was essentially an extension of the Devil.

V-E Day: Mormons Begin Posthumous Baptisms of Holocaust Victims

During a time of such radical change, there was no doubt such a diverse membership would have differing opinions about the Nazi Party and its practices, and how to handle those new procedures. However, postwar Latter-day Saint leaders made few attempts to follow in the suit of other Christian denominations and express sympathy for victims of the Holocaust nor have they attempted to claim any responsibility for their actions or lack thereof. On the other hand, the Catholic Church has offered regret, sympathy, and apology for their lack of effort in assisting any and all victims of the Holocaust and World War II. Pope Pius XII and the Catholic Church

¹⁴⁰ "The Legalizing of Bigotry," *Golden Age*, 1936.

¹⁴¹ J. Lowell Bito, "The German Crisis," *Golden Age*, Jan. 4 1933, 210.

have had a long history of anti-Semitism, yet they received numerous criticisms for Nazi collaboration (i.e. the *Reichskonkordat*), failure to help those in need, and even giving an “impression of stereotypical anti-Semitic contempt.”¹⁴² There have been several examples of Catholics who did assist Jews, of course, but it was “without instruction from the Vatican” as Pius XII spoke indirectly of the atrocities being committed against Jews and “he never used the word “Jews”” or directly accused the Nazis of the atrocities they were committing.¹⁴³ Pius XII was not unlike Mormon leadership but the latter actively and publicly contradicted their positions on religious persecution during the same period and simply cannot be held to the same standard. Had Mormon publications and leaders practiced apoliticism as they encouraged their German followers to do, or had they offered any semblance of sentiment in the aftermath of World War II, it would have been easier to also accept, but not excuse, their complacency during the Holocaust along with other Christian denominations.

As the Second World War came to an end, Latter-day Saints essentially picked up as if they never left off with the Jewish people. As with their history texts, the Church more or less skipped over the darkest elements of Hitler’s Germany, placed God’s chosen people on a pedestal and, again, advocated for a return of Israel to the Jews. As unbelievable as that was the irony hardly began there. In fact, as recent as 2012, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been under intense scrutiny for their “posthumous baptizing of Holocaust victims,” the same ones they failed to acknowledge in their texts.¹⁴⁴ Mormons were met with shock and criticism in the 1990s after it was revealed that “names of about 380,000 Jewish Holocaust victims had been submitted for posthumous baptism by” LDS members. Perhaps the baptizing of Anne Frank was just an overlooked mistake or poor judgment on the Church’s part?

¹⁴² Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope*, 75.

¹⁴³ Susan Zuccotti, *Under His Very Windows*, 243, 308.

¹⁴⁴ American Jewish Committee, “AJC, Mormons Hold Historic Dialogue,” *PR Newswire*, 15 August 2012, accessed on 30 November 2016, proquest.com/docview/1033494183?accountid=10628.

Doubtful, considering she has been baptized by different Mormon churches at least nine times to date while Hitler has only received one posthumous baptism.¹⁴⁵

The Church continued to tout its pride in Mormons who had faithfully followed the Twelfth Article of Faith at the same time they were removing and disregarding the prophetic Tenth Article of Faith. Yes, decorated war veterans were often celebrated regardless of their national affiliation and position in the nation. Many Mormon historians found ways to deflect from these actions by telling of individual Latter-day Saints who had a “change of heart” while serving Nazis or describing how Mormon “brothers were released from their duties because of pressure from their Nazi employers,” indicating that the sect was not being accepted by the party as many generally believed or were told.¹⁴⁶ In the case of these recollections the Church has forgotten humility; the fact that they can describe workplace discrimination means their members had and were being hired for jobs unlike many who were actively harassed and interned for their “minority status.”

Histories within the Church stressed the impressive feat of survival that Nazi-occupied missions were able to achieve, although their references to Church-Nazi parallels were interchanged with examples of “suffering” endured by Saints. Ironically, Jehovah’s Witnesses, one of the only religious organizations to make a stand against the Nazis, “lost as many as one-quarter of . . . members,” yet successfully managed to rebound later. As of 2013, Witnesses had “four times as many German members” as the Latter-day Saints that were “few in number . . . powerless” and “unable to make a difference.”¹⁴⁷ “Mormon writers see the period as one of suffering,” yet there was no outstanding evidence to truly support that sentiment and, in fact, the only suffering may have been in the ability to convert new members, whereas the Witnesses were successful even while detained.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ “Here Are 10 Famous People Posthumously Baptized By Mormons,” *Business Insider*, 3 March 2012, accessed on 13 May 2020, www.businessinsider.com.

¹⁴⁶ Keele, “A Latter-day Saint in Hitler’s SS,” 21; King, “Strategies for Survival,” 228.

¹⁴⁷ Nelson, *Moroni and the Swastika*, 415-416; Tobler, “The Jews, the Mormons, and the Holocaust,” 64.

¹⁴⁸ Keele, “A Latter-day Saint in Hitler’s SS,” 21; King, “Strategies for Survival,” 228.

III. Conclusion

While “Witnesses took no theological stand on the persecution of the Jews” and may have believed their situation to be “some divine justice being executed upon the ‘betrayers of Jehovah’” — this argument has also been used by the Mormon Church — they still did not partake in standing idly by as many other groups, religious or otherwise, so easily did.¹⁴⁹ In fact, as the Latter-day Saints chose to hang “Jude verboten” signs on their church doors, the Witnesses were being openly persecuted and still calling out Christian religions, especially the Catholics, for their blatant anti-Semitism. “For the pope to let a few Jews find sanctuary within . . . Vatican City . . . represents little sympathy for the Jewish situation, when right under his nose at Rome the prewar 12,000 Jewish residents of the city are greatly reduced by Nazi deportations . . . without protest by the pope.”¹⁵⁰ This Witness went on to say that the Pope only allowed Jews sanctuary at the Vatican as a “counterbalance for . . . harboring of prominent Nazi and Japanese official personages” there.¹⁵¹ Whether it was foolish or brave, the audacity to make such a bold statement, especially at that time, was not uncommon among Jehovah's Witnesses. Perhaps it was their unwavering commitment to their beliefs that led to such infamous Nazi leaders as Heinrich Himmler and Theodor Eicke to tout the group “as an example of the loyalty” they expected from the population to the party and Hitler.¹⁵²

An apolitical, non-militaristic minority lauded for its dedication and simultaneously despised for its unwavering stance against conformity went down in history as the Nazi’s most intensely targeted Christian sect as well as one of the only Christian collectives to actively oppose their state. Approximately 10,000, or half of the German population of Witnesses, were imprisoned or sent to concentration camps,

¹⁴⁹ King, “Strategies for Survival,” 215.

¹⁵⁰ “A Remnant for the Kingdom,” *The Watchtower*, Apr. 15, 1945, 115.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² King, “Strategies for Survival,” 220.

resulting in between 1,400-5,000 deaths, by execution or otherwise, while in Nazi custody.¹⁵³ Both the Witnesses and the Mormons had a population equal to less than 1/1000th of one percent of the German population, yet one group exaggerated a narrative in order to avoid acknowledging their actions during the persecution of their own members while the other was included amongst those forced to wear triangles on armbands. Jehovah's Witnesses proclaimed, "faithful Christians will continue to serve God, regardless of persecution," and, all things considered, one would be remiss not to recognize that the Witnesses did in fact live up to that ideology when tested by the Third Reich.¹⁵⁴

Perhaps in a last ditch effort to have their membership perceived more positively, the Mormons made a martyr out of Helmuth Hübener, a young man who did *not* abide by the Twelfth Article of Faith but was beheaded because he "sympathised (sic) with the Jewish neighbours he saw persecuted by the Nazis."¹⁵⁵ And perhaps it was another overlooked mistake, but Mormon history failed to mention that he was *excommunicated* by the Church for his actions.¹⁵⁶ Unfortunately for them, when this attempt at idolization of Hübener was made the Church was met with scathing criticism from one of the men who bore witness to the youth's persecution and lack of Church support. German-Mormon leader Otto Berndt stated Hübener's actions were "not inspired by the Church" and then implied members who adhered to the "laws of the land" (i.e. Twelfth Article of Faith) were "cowards."¹⁵⁷ Given the history, it was not surprising that at the time of Hübener's execution the same man was met with dismissal after echoing a warning he received from Gestapo. They told

¹⁵³ Numbers differed within sources used.

¹⁵⁴ *End of Nazism*, 1940, 27

¹⁵⁵ "Nazi poster reveals executions of teenager who listened to BBC," *The Telegraph*, 28 September 2010.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* See also: Schnibbe, *The Price*, 49.

¹⁵⁷ Carter, "Patriotism and Resistance, Brotherhood and Bombs," 19-20.

him that once the war ended and they had “time to devote to it and after [they] have eliminated the Jews, [the] Mormons [were] next!”¹⁵⁸

The few niche examples of good deeds by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the Hitler years have been overemphasized and coupled with an equally misleading depiction of good, Articles-of-Faith-abiding Mormons. They have been lauded for how they “survived” and even thrived during a time of war and cruelty while their “suffering” has been noted time and again by claims of discrimination and suspicion due to their faith. Of course, with the Holocaust omitted from their teachings it would be hard to properly associate the many tragedies and atrocities of the times with the millions of God’s “chosen people” who actually were victims. The closest they have come was in their description of “natural evil” within “theodicy” where they dedicated a single vague sentence to the event: “The Holocaust is a glaring modern instance.”¹⁵⁹ Church recollection of their involvement during World War II has been written by sympathizing members who were hardly capable of mentioning the word “Holocaust” let alone referencing the persecution and suffering of anyone other than Latter-day Saints in their *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* and Church history text for students.¹⁶⁰

In what may be true Latter-day Saint fashion, their “suffering” was largely experienced by the Church’s mission work and the decline of new members in areas affected by the Third Reich. Despite their claims of success and survival the Church membership in Europe, especially Germany, failed to progress following the Second World War even as their worldwide population reached one million in the early 1950s; still a fraction of the population, Jehovah’s Witnesses have been considerably more

¹⁵⁸ Keele and Tobler, “The Fuhrer’s New Clothes: Helmuth Hubener and the Mormons in the Third Reich,” *Sunstone* vol. 5, (Nov/Dec 1980): 24.

¹⁵⁹ *Encyclopedia of Mormonism: The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1992), see “Theodicy,” accessed on 29 May 2020, www.eom.byu.edu.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, see the following sections that reference World War II: “Theodicy,” “World Religions (Non-Christian) and Mormonism,” “History of the Church,” “Lifestyle,” “Economic Aid,” “Welfare Services,” “Europe, The Church in.” See also *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, specifically “Chapter Forty: The Saints during World War II.”

successful reaching and converting Germans.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, as Mormon leaders deflected when asked about their actions and lack thereof during one of the most horrific events of modern history, the majority of other involved religious leaders and organizations largely attempted to express guilt regarding the roles they played. By focusing solely on themselves instead of everyone involved with the Holocaust and World War II, the Mormons not only neglected God's declaration that "He denieth none that come unto Him," but have further alienated themselves within the Christian community and the world as a whole.¹⁶²

The Latter-day Saints have made several strides worthy of celebration since the end of World War II. Mormons' image became more diversified as they provided "[r]elief without regard to race, nationality, or religion" and greatly eased "the suffering of deprived people" all around the world.¹⁶³ They have attempted to distance themselves from rumors of polygamy, which was officially outlawed in 1890, as well as lifted their race-driven priesthood ban in 1978. Unfortunately, these events left much to be desired as they still had yet to reconcile their abandonment of the Jews and instead progressed an exaggerated and misleading narrative. Church leaders continued to cry out about the Twelfth Article of Faith over and over again, but the world knew that the "Articles of Faith" were confiscated and subsequently banned in Nazi Germany.¹⁶⁴ They have also dedicated monuments and plays to Nazi resister Helmuth Hübener, but their records showed he was excommunicated for his celebrated actions. Mormons repeated past actions and re-dedicated Jerusalem to the Jews in 1948, but the world knew they were posthumously baptizing the same Holocaust victims they

¹⁶¹ The Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses report their German populations as approximately 39,700 and 165,400 respectively, accessed on 2 June 2020, www.churchofjesuschrist.org and www.jw.org.

¹⁶² Mormon, *The Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 26:33, 103-104.

¹⁶³ Ralf Grünke, "Germany," *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, accessed on 6 June 2020, www.churchofjesuschrist.org.

¹⁶⁴ *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, loc. 15194, Kindle Edition. See also: Carter, "The Rise of the Nazi Dictatorship," 62; Dixon, "Mormons in the Third Reich," 73; Nelson, "The Mormons in Nazi Germany History and Memory" (dissertation, Texas A&M University, December 2012), 284, 286.

refused to help or later recognize. And lest the Mormons forgot, the world and especially God's chosen people certainly did not.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: A Timeline of Events*

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- 1820 God and Jesus Christ appear before Joseph Smith, known as the “First Vision”
- 1823 The angel Moroni visits Smith and bestows upon him the task of receiving and translating the four golden plates that contain the Book of Mormon.
- 1829 John the Baptist appears before Smith and fellow Book of Mormon scribe Oliver Cowdery and explains that the Melchizedek Priesthood will become a part of the Church so that they may perform baptisms on the deceased.
- 1830 The Book of Mormon is finally completed and published.
The first LDS missionaries, including Smith, head west to proselytize with Native Americans in Ohio and Missouri. One-time slave, “Black Pete,” joins the Church movement in Ohio.
- 1831 The first LDS temple will begin its construction in Independence, Missouri and the site will be considered the “New Jerusalem” throughout Church history. Smith has many revelations which will significantly impact the structure and organization of the Church, including large Mormon gatherings that will later materialize into biannual conferences.
- 1832 The first violent act against the Mormons takes place; Joseph Smith is tarred and feathered by a mob.
- 1833 More violent acts are committed against the Mormons by Missourians displeased with their presence.
- 1836 Old Testament prophets appear before an LDS gathering and confer on them the responsibility of the “gathering of Israel and the new dispensation of the fullness of times.”
- 1837 LDS burst onto the international scene as they begin mission work in England.
- 1838 Mormon-Missouri War pins LDS against a Missouri State Militia and results in the “Extermination Order” being issued.
Missouri Executive Order 44 - Gov. Boggs orders the Missouri militia to wage

violence on Mormons in an effort to destroy or expel them. This order was used as validation by other residents to attack LDS.

17 Mormons, including children, killed at Hawn's Mill massacre; Brigham Young begins leading Saints east to Illinois — this will become the Mormon establishment of Nauvoo.

1841 Elder Orson Hyde goes to Palestine to “dedicate the Holy Land for the return of the Jews.”

Hyde also had Church literature translated into German as he planned on Proselytizing “German-speaking European Jews” on his trip. (Loc 7262)

1843 Joseph Smith announces new Mormon practices: posthumous baptism and polygamy.

Smith also encourages increased support and rhetoric for anti-slavery and freedom of speech.

1844 Smith is arrested and killed while in police custody. The murderers were never convicted.

1846 Thousands of Mormons follow Young to the west again due to continued harassment.

1847 Young and his followers reached Great Salt Lake (at the time not within the U.S. boundaries) where they will end up settling for the foreseeable future.

1848 The U.S. gains western territory, including what is now known as Utah.

1852 Young officially bans other races from entering the priesthood.

1857 Mountain Meadows massacre occurs. Mormons and Native Americans attack a wagon train from Arkansas and kill 120 people.

1866 LDS membership reaches approximately 60,000 members worldwide.

1872-3 “Brethren felt it was time to reassert the great interest the Church had in a regathering of the Jews to Palestine” and head back to survey Europe for proselytizing opportunities.

1877 Brigham Young dies.

1878 LDS membership swells to nearly 110,000.

- 1894 LDS membership reaches 200,000.
- 1904 Polygamy will be met with excommunication from the Church and leaders insist they will cooperate in members' federal prosecution. The hotly contested practice had been nationally outlawed for over 40 years at this point.
- 1953 LDS membership passes one million.
Church leaders declare they will no longer assist in the prosecution of polygamy charges brought upon its members following a federal raid on one of their communities.
- 1978 LDS leadership announce that all races are again allowed to be ordained in the priesthood.
- 1989 Jerusalem Center dedicated enabling BYU students travel to the Holy Land to further their education and experience. Local Jewish leaders require adherence to strict "no proselytizing" agreement.