

The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840-41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Classes

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James Palmer, stone mason and bricklayer, was born in 1820 in the small parish of Dymock in Gloucestershire, England.¹ After only four years formal schooling, which included considerable Bible study, young James was apprenticed out by his parents. Such apprenticeships often lasted for seven years, but in this case the boy chafed at the strict regimen and bad treatment he received until one day his resentment overflowed in a doubled up fist which knocked his unsuspecting master to the ground. Life as an apprentice immediately improved, but before long James successfully sued for release from his bond and went back to his parents.

In the meantime, the Palmer family had made a far-reaching religious decision which would soon have a profound effect upon their son. They had left the Church of England and, along with hundreds of others in the region, joined a movement known as the United Brethren, which had broken from the Primitive Methodists. This sect was characterized by a highly democratic administration and it placed special emphasis on faith, repentance, good works, and the literal atonement of Christ as the elements of salvation. Young James quickly accepted the new faith of his parents and at age twenty, while

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¹Palmer's life is told in "James Palmer's Travels and Ministry in the Gospel," manuscript, Church Historical Department.

still working at his trade, became a local preacher among the United Brethren.

Typical of the common folk of England, the Palmer family were well prepared to receive the message of Wilford Woodruff who, in the spring of 1840, began preaching Mormonism in that region. They first heard this American apostle in the town of Ledbury, after Thomas Kington, leader of the United Brethren in the area, had already been converted to Mormonism.² Almost immediately the Palmers and some of their friends were also baptized. James was soon ordained a priest and on 14 June he was appointed to preside over the branch of the Mormon Church at Killcott, not far from his home town of Dymock. In later months he traveled "without purse or scrip" as a missionary to many other communities of England, and eventually he emigrated to America.

The story of James Palmer was characteristic of those of thousands of British citizens who joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Victorian Era. Recruited largely from among the working classes, many of these Mormon converts were already actively seeking a religious faith that would speak more to their fundamentalist and democratic inclinations than the established church, and had joined various sects in their quest for religious truth. They were temperamentally well prepared for the message of Mormonism when it came.

Mormon missionary activity began in England in 1837, but the most historically significant boost to that activity came in 1840-41 when the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was sent from America to take charge of the work. By the time they left England in April 1841, the apostles had not only personally baptized hundreds of people, but had established an effective missionary system that would soon become the most productive in the Church. In addition, they laid the foundation for an important publication program by producing the first European edition of the Book of Mormon, compiling and distributing a hymn book for the Saints in England, publishing some 60,000 tracts and pamphlets,³ and establishing the *Latter-day Saints*

²The slight discrepancy of dates between Palmer's record and that of Wilford Woodruff's probably results from Palmer's account being recorded some years after the fact as a reminiscence.

³These included a most important work by Orson Pratt, *Interesting Account Of Several Remarkable Visions, and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American*

Millennial Star. They also organized a trans-Atlantic emigration program which would result, within fifty years, in the move to America of more than 88,000 European Saints, including some 55,000 from Britain.⁴

In some ways Joseph Smith displayed a singular optimism in sending the Quorum of the Twelve to Europe at that particular time in Mormon history. On 8 July 1838 they were specifically commanded to "go over the great waters, and there promulgate my gospel" (D&C 118:4).⁵ The date of 26 April 1839 was set for their departure from Far West, Missouri. By that time, however, the Mormons had been expelled from Missouri and on the appointed day the Twelve were forced to re-enter the area under cover of darkness, take their symbolic departure, then hastily retreat. When the apostles finally left for England, the Saints were only beginning to establish themselves around the swampy settlement of Commerce, Illinois. Poverty and sickness were rampant, there was little assurance that the families of the apostles could be cared for while they were gone, and the tangible means for missionary support were almost nonexistent. Under such conditions, it would seem that Joseph Smith should keep close to him the very men whose leadership could be most helpful. The commandment, nevertheless, was there, and possibly also a realization that perhaps the destiny of the Church itself depended upon gathering new numbers from abroad. And the brethren went.

Great Britain was an obvious spot for the labors of the Twelve abroad. It had been officially opened for missionary work in 1837-38 by Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde,⁶ and had proven to be a fruitful ground for converts. Since this initial success, however, the Church in Britain had fallen on hard times. Even though there were several hundred baptisms,

Records (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1840), which contains the first version of Joseph Smith's First Vision to be published in Church sources. While sources disagree on the number of tracts published, this 60,000 figure is from Brigham Young in *The Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1871), 13:212.

⁴P. A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 144.

⁵See also Doctrine and Covenants 107:33 and 112:28.

⁶See James B. Allen and Thomas G. Alexander, eds., *Manchester Mormons: The Journal of William Clayton, 1840 to 1842* (Salt Lake City and Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1974), pp. 4-11; and *President Heber C. Kimball's Journal* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor, 1882).

there was also substantial apostasy so that by 1840 there was little, if any, actual increase in membership.⁷ It took the Quorum of the Twelve to regenerate this somewhat lethargic missionary movement into the most vibrant one in the Church.

The circumstances of poverty and ill health under which most of the apostles finally left Nauvoo, Illinois, are well known, and need not be repeated here.⁸ More important to the mission was the preparation they went through before leaving. Throughout the summer of 1839 they met frequently with Joseph Smith, who instructed them in spiritual affairs, doctrine, and practical leadership. Significantly, many of the things he said foreshadowed some of their experiences in England. "Devil experiences," for example, wherein the missionaries believed they were actually wrestling with the powers of darkness, were not uncommon after they arrived. Perhaps in anticipation of such, Joseph Smith told the apostles in private of a certain "key" by which they could detect the devil if he appeared as a man.⁹

More to the point of their mission were the instructions given on 2 July when Joseph lectured them on prudence, humility, priesthood authority, charity, and the evils of self-sufficiency, self-righteousness, and self-importance. The significance of the following excerpt lies in the fact that the tone it set seemed to characterize the general attitude of the missionaries once they arrived in England:

. . . and let the Twelve be humble, and not be exalted, and beware of pride, and not seek to excel one above another, but act for each other's good, and pray for one another, and honor our brother or make honorable mention of his name, and not backbite and devour our brother. . . . Must the new ones that are chosen to fill the places of

⁷Allen and Alexander, *Manchester Mormons*, p. 10. Writing on the period between 1838 and 1840, Willard Richards stated that "The Church at this time was in its infancy, and needed much instruction, which necessarily occupied the attention of the presiding Elders to a great extent; and as there were few laborers in the field, the spread of the work was not very rapid for some time." Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1948), 4:320. Hereafter cited as *HC*.

⁸For a typical account, see Richard L. Evans, *A Century of Mormonism in Great Britain* (Salt Lake City: Deseret New Press, 1937), pp. 91-93; or B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1930), 2:22-26.

⁹Significantly, this was the same test that appeared later as a revelation, but dated 9 February 1839. See Wilford Woodruff Journal, 27 June 1839, Church Historical Department, and compare with Doctrine and Covenants 129: 4-8.

those that are fallen, of the quorum of the Twelve, begin to exalt themselves, until they exalt themselves so high that they will soon tumble over and have a great fall, and go wallowing through the mud and mire and darkness, Judas like, to the buffetings of Satan, as several of the quorum have done, or will they learn wisdom and be wise? O God, give them wisdom, and keep them humble, I pray. . . .

Then O ye Twelve! notice this *Key*, and be wise for Christ's sake, and your own soul's sake. Ye are not sent out to be taught, but to teach. Let every word be seasoned with grace. Be vigilant; be sober. It is a day of warning, and not of many words. Act honestly before God and man. Beware of Gentile sophistry; such as bowing and scraping unto men in whom you have no confidence. Be honest, open, frank in all your intercourse with mankind.¹⁰

THE APOSTLES IN ENGLAND:

BRIEF SUMMARY OF A SUCCESS STORY

There was nothing unique about the arrival of American missionaries in England during this time. It was not uncommon to see revivalist preachers from America in the streets of Preston, and the various waves of revival ministers who frequently came in search of new converts brought with them the techniques of camp meetings and urban crusades, both of which were used to advantage by the Mormons.¹¹ Thus, although the coming of the apostles had been long anticipated by the British Saints, their actual arrival probably passed unnoticed in the busy seaport of Liverpool.

They arrived in two groups. The first consisted of John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff, along with Elder Theodore Turley, who docked in Liverpool on 11 January 1840. John Taylor, age thirty-one, was a native of England and a converted Methodist preacher. Woodruff was thirty-three and had been trained as a miller. He had been an apostle only since the April meeting at Far West.

Six days later they held a conference with the mission presidency in Preston, then immediately went about their business. John Taylor and Joseph Fielding returned to Liverpool, where a number of their relatives lived. Preaching first to a congregation headed by Fielding's brother-in-law, the Reverend Tim-

¹⁰HC 3:384.

¹¹Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, p. 2; Frank Thistlethwaite, *The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), pp. 85-86.

othy Matthews, then hiring their own hall, the two converted twenty-eight people by April, some of them from Reverend Matthews' own flock.

Wilford Woodruff, meanwhile, proceeded south to the inland county of Staffordshire. He stopped in an area known as the Potteries, which consisted of many scattered villages and contained about 20,000 people. Here was the most important center in England for the manufacture of china and earthenware, largely because of the excellence achieved in this trade by the late Josiah Wedgwood. In Burslem, one of the chief towns of the district, Woodruff found a branch of some sixty-six Latter-day Saints, including Elder Alfred Cordon, an outstanding local leader who would perform important missionary service in the coming months.

The American apostle worked in the Potteries district with modest success for about six weeks, until, as he wrote in his diary on 2 March, "The Lord warned me to go to the South." In the Potteries Woodruff frequently preached and stayed in the home of William Benbow, a member of the Church in Hanley, and on 3 March Benbow was with Wilford Woodruff as he went south by omnibus. The following day the two arrived at the home of William's brother, John Benbow, a prosperous farmer who cultivated three hundred acres of land near the small settlement of Castle Froome in Herefordshire.¹² This home at "Hill Farm" became an important center for Mormon preaching and within two days John Benbow and his wife were among the first six converts to be baptized in that region. All of them had belonged to the United Brethren.

At the Benbow home as well as in some of their own chapels Woodruff began preaching among the United Brethren. Within one month and five days his labors had netted 158 converts, including 48 lay preachers. Especially important was Thomas Kington, superintendent of the local United Brethren organization, who was baptized on 21 March, ordained an elder the next day, and within three months was presiding over

¹²See Woodruff Journal, 2-4 March 1840. Mormon writers traditionally have failed even to mention the presence of John Benbow's brother William. It would not be contrary to any concept of revelation, however, to suggest that the inspiration to go South may have come after a previous suggestion by William that his brother might be an eager recipient of the Mormon message. For the traditional story, see Evans, *Century of Mormonism*, pp. 110-11, and S. Dilworth Young, *Here is Brigham . . .* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), pp. 250-51.

the Gadfield Elm Conference, which consisted of twelve branches.¹³ Woodruff's flock also included a former clerk of the Church of England, a constable who had been sent to stop one of his preaching meetings, and a number of wealthy farmers. By April, when he left Herefordshire to attend a conference of the Twelve, there were nearly 200 more ready to be baptized.¹⁴

This scenery flung into my hands or under my superintendency & care of 42 established places of preaching which were licensed according to law including one chapel. This has opened the largest field for labour & increase of numbers of any door that has been opened in the same length of time since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has been established.¹⁵

The amazing potential in Herefordshire so overwhelmed Wilford Woodruff that he began to implore Willard Richards to come and help. "I cannot do the work alone," he wrote on 31 March. "I am called to Baptize 4 or 5 times a day. I want no better man than yourself to connect and labor with me here & help me reap this mighty harvest."¹⁶ For one thing, he was fearful that too much activity on the part of the converted preachers would close the doors of the congregations to Mormon preaching. He had instructed them to continue in their appointments and try to prepare the people for the gospel, but not to administer any gospel ordinances until he could have some help in organizing the Church and ordaining "such persons as God shall call. It has put me at times to my wits end to know what to do with so many places of preaching & preachers," he confided to Richards on 3 April. "I wonder," he added longingly, "why the [rest of the] Twelve do not come from America."¹⁷

Three days later the second group of apostles arrived. Brigham Young, a thirty-eight year old carpenter, joiner, and glazier, had been a dedicated and successful Mormon missionary

¹³Woodruff Journal, 21 and 22 March and 14 June 1840.

¹⁴Ibid., 16 April 1840.

¹⁵Ibid. In this article, whenever manuscript sources are quoted all original spelling and grammar has been left intact. For the sake of readability, however, periods have been placed at the end of sentences and capitals at the beginning, even if they were not in the original.

¹⁶Wilford Woodruff to Willard Richards, 31 March 1840, in Wilford Woodruff papers, Church Historical Department.

¹⁷Wilford Woodruff to Willard Richards, 3 April 1840.

since 1832 and was now president of the Quorum. Heber C. Kimball, also thirty-eight, was both a blacksmith and a potter, and must have felt at ease when he visited the Staffordshire Potteries. Orson Pratt, age twenty-eight, was possibly the best-educated of the group and, together with his older brother, Parley, authored most of the tracts and pamphlets used by the missionaries. Parley was thirty-two, a farmer by profession and also a former preacher of the Disciples of Christ. George A. Smith was, at twenty-two, the youngest of the group. He had grown up on a farm, but for the past several years had spent most of his time doing missionary work.

Immediately the Quorum held a conference in Preston, 14-16 April. There they ordained Willard Richards, age thirty-six, who had been doing missionary work in England since he accompanied Heber C. Kimball there in 1837. This brought the number of apostles in England to eight. Three others, Orson Hyde, John E. Page, and William B. Smith, did not fulfill the mission, and one vacancy remained in the Quorum.

The Saints in England had eagerly anticipated the arrival of the Twelve, and on 17 April Alice Moon made it an occasion for celebration. Forty years earlier she had been married, but in the excitement had forgotten to break open the bottle of wine that had been especially saved for the occasion. She then planned to open it when her first child was born, but again forgot, and it was likewise passed over on other special occasions. When the Twelve visited her home in Penwortham, just two miles from Preston, she declared that she now knew there had been something providential in its preservation. They accepted the wine, blessed it, and each drank a glass.¹⁸ The next day they scattered to their various fields of labor.

Willard Richards' first assignment as a new apostle was to go to Herefordshire, for which Woodruff expressed much gratitude.¹⁹ Perhaps typical of their success was a meeting on 14 June in the Gadfield Elm Chapel of the United Brethren. Here were assembled preachers and members of the Bran Green and Gadfield Elm Branches of the Froomes Hill Circuit of that church. Thomas Kington moved that the meeting henceforth be known by the name of the Bran Green and Gadfield Elm

¹⁸Elden Jay Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Privately printed, 1968), pp. 71-72.

¹⁹Woodruff Journal, 22 June 1840.



Possibly the Gadfield Elm Chapel of the United Brethren where the Twelve held the 14 June "Bran Green and Gadfield Elm Conference. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Photograph courtesy of Brian Morton, Oakley Cottage, Bosbury, Ledbury, Herefordshire, England.

Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The motion carried unanimously.²⁰ The apostles had so organized this church that they could now declare their final independence from the United Brethren. Richards continued to work with them for two months and Woodruff remained until August, when his flock had grown to 800 members.

The missionary success of the other members of the Twelve was not so dramatic as that of Wilford Woodruff and his brethren in Herefordshire, but for the most part it was steady and encouraging. Heber C. Kimball was assigned to visit the various churches he had built up on his previous mission. Orson Pratt was sent to Scotland, where by the end of the year Church membership increased from twenty-one to some two hundred. John Taylor was appointed to return to Liverpool. There he spent his time not only doing missionary work but also helping to select hymns for the hymn book and reading proof for the printing of the Book of Mormon. He also spent ten days in Ireland and two and a half months on the Isle of Man. George A. Smith went to the Potteries for his first assignment, and except for nearly two months in London did most of his missionary work there.

Brigham Young and Parley P. Pratt were especially concerned with publication ventures and, with Heber C. Kimball, had been appointed as a publications committee. Elder Young accompanied Wilford Woodruff to Herefordshire and for about a month worked closely with him, but as soon as he was able to obtain substantial loans from John Benbow and Thomas Kington he went to Manchester, rented a house as a headquarters, and began working toward publishing the Book of Mormon. Parley P. Pratt went directly to Manchester after the Preston conference, for he had been appointed to edit and publish the *Millennial Star*. He remained there throughout the mission, except for a period from July to October when he sailed to New York and returned with his family. He was to remain in charge of the Church in England for a year and a half after the rest of the Twelve left.

With the dispersion of the Quorum, the tempo of missionary activity increased significantly. Heber C. Kimball wrote to his wife on 25 May that "the work of the Lord has taken a deep hold in this Land, and causes the people to tremble for we

²⁰Ibid., 14 June 1840. See also a similar incident in 21 June entry.

have broken up many churches."²¹ Such expressions of success were myriad. Alfred Cordon reported from the Potteries in September that "There is a better prospect in the Potteries than there ever was since the work commenced here."²² Joseph Fielding wrote in his diary on 15 November regarding Manchester: "The Work here is prospering. The Gift of Tongues is very common. The Lord is shewing the Saints great things by the Gift of Prophecy etc. Even Children speak great and marvelous things; it is truly astonishing to see it."²³ And Kimball lent colorful expression to such success stories when he wrote to George A. Smith on 12 December, he was "glad to learn of the prosperity of the work in that part of the Land. You say the Devil is mad. This makes me glad, and I shall not try to please him."²⁴ It seemed as if his letter to America eight months earlier had been verified: "The Gospel is spreading, the devils are roaring. As nigh as I can learn, the priests are howling, the tares are binding up, the wheat is gathering, nations are trembling, and kingdoms tottering."²⁵

But despite their enthusiasm, the apostles and elders did not enjoy universal success. In August Heber C. Kimball, Wilford Woodruff, and George A. Smith opened London for missionary work, and Brigham Young spent nearly two weeks with them in December. Here their enthusiasm was dampened as Londoners treated them with profound indifference. Unlike the folk in the farmlands of Herefordshire, Londoners seemed much less interested in evangelism of any sort. With a population of over two million, London was a huge metropolis where, if attendance at church and chapel is any indication, the people simply were not attracted to organized religion.²⁶

When London ministers refused to let them use their churches, Kimball, Woodruff, and Smith tried to preach at Smithfield, a London cattle market, but were promptly stopped by officials who claimed that London city ordinances prohibited such practices. They, therefore, moved outside the London

²¹Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, 25 May 1840, Heber C. Kimball papers, Church Historical Department.

²²*Millennial Star*, 1:135.

²³Joseph Fielding, "Diary of Joseph Fielding" (Typescript, Fielding Family Association, n.d.), p. 97.

²⁴Heber C. Kimball to George A. Smith, 12 December 1840, George A. Smith papers, Church Historical Department.

²⁵*HC* 4:115.

²⁶K. S. Ingliss, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 1-2.

borough limits to a place called "Tabernacle Square" where they preached to a crowd of five hundred.

Nearly two weeks went by before the missionaries could baptize their first convert in London, a Mr. Connors.²⁷ Such slow response was a rather new experience for the usually successful Wilford Woodruff, and by November they still had gathered only eleven members. Little wonder that their general impression was negative. "London is the hardest place I ever visited for establishing the gospel," wrote Woodruff in his diary. "It is full of everything but righteousness."²⁸ Its very hugeness overwhelmed Heber Kimball, who complained of "such a throng of people as I never saw before, and so much noise that we can neither sleep nor think."²⁹ In addition, the three missionaries lamented the extreme competition for souls. They wrote to America that this huge metropolis contained

six hundred, three score and six different gods, gospels, redeemers, plans of salvation, religions, churches, commandments (essential and non-essential), orders of preaching, roads to heaven and hell; and that this order of things had so affected the minds of the people, that it almost required a horn to be blown from the highest heavens, in order to awaken the attention of the people.³⁰

To them it was "the great babylon"³¹ but because of their persistent efforts George A. Smith, at least, felt that their garments were "clean from the blood of the inhabitants of the British metropolis."³² When young Lorenzo Snow, just recently arrived as a missionary from America, learned that the apostles were planning to put him in charge when they left London he wrote to George A. Smith:

I think you exhibited much wisdom in leaving that seat of Satan. . . . I suppose you intend keeping me preaching here to the spirits in prison until I have been properly prepared then send me to the great seat of his black majesty from whence you have so fortunately escaped. Elder Young writes in a letter which I just received from Elder Woodruff "we do not know but we shall be glad for Elder Snow to come to

²⁷HC 4:182-84, 221.

²⁸Woodruff Journal, 2 September 1840.

²⁹Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, 19 August 1840.

³⁰HC 4:223.

³¹Woodruff Journal, 19 August 1840.

³²George A. Smith, "History of George Albert Smith," 9 November 1840, typescript, Church Historical Department.

London if he can be spared there and we can provide a place for him here." I wonder where you will send me next.³³

A branch was eventually established in London. It even prospered somewhat under Lorenzo Snow, and the apostles were continually optimistic about future possibilities there. Nevertheless, considering the time and effort that went into opening that city, coupled with its symbolic importance as the capital of the empire, the London effort was undoubtedly the greatest disappointment of the mission.

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR PROBLEMS

What were the social and economic conditions observed by the American apostles in England? Who were the people they so readily attracted to Mormonism? And why did they have so much success among them?

The Quorum of the Twelve came into a country disturbed by economic difficulty. England was the "workshop of the world" but beginning in 1837 industry came almost to a standstill, and with high unemployment among the working classes in the manufacturing districts, destitution and starvation were not uncommon.³⁴ The apostles were deeply stirred by the poverty they saw. George A. Smith observed in the Potteries: "So many of the poor are begging that it would astonish the Americans. England is in distress and I pray to the Lord for deliverance of the Saints from the coming ruin."³⁵ That ruin never came, for the depression witnessed by the apostles was only a momentary phenomenon in a period that in the long run led to greater prosperity for the working class, but conditions were to get worse before they turned for the better.³⁶

Everywhere the apostles went they found squalor. "The poor," wrote Wilford Woodruff, "are in as great bondage as the children of Israel in Egypt."³⁷ Conditions among the Saints in the Staffordshire Potteries district were bleakly described by George A. Smith:

³³Lorenzo Snow to George A. Smith, 10 December 1840.

³⁴John F. C. Harrison, *The Early Victorians* (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 12.

³⁵George A. Smith, "History," 15 February 1840. See also Brigham Young and Willard Richards to the First Presidency of the Church, 5 September 1840, in Brigham Young papers, Church Historical Department.

³⁶Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1959), p. 295.

³⁷Woodruff Journal, 14 January 1841.

Of the more than 450 Saints in this District not more than one third of them have full Employment. Many of the Rest Not more than two or three Days per Week and Many have no work at all. Times are growing harder Every Week. Some are turned out of Employ because they have been baptised by the Latter Day Saints.³⁸

Heber C. Kimball wrote concerning poverty in Manchester:

I was asking some of the brethren what made the peopl look so bad. They said becaus they ware famished for the wont of food. Say they to me thare are hundreds that are starving for the wont of food and other things. I thought thare was misery a nough in Preston. It is nothing to compare with manchester. I asked them if they thought the brethren went hungry. Yes many of them have not to eat. Times are so hard they cant quit work. Therefore they have to go hungry. Thare has been such a change here in two years as never was known by the oldest men in this land.³⁹

He later made an interesting observation when he saw Queen Victoria in a London procession: "You would be astonished to see the stur thare is made over a little queen at the same time thousands starving to deth fore a little bread."⁴⁰

The depression naturally hit hardest among the working classes of the urban communities, and it was from among these people that most Mormon converts came.⁴¹ There were also substantial numbers from rural communities but relatively few, like John Benbow, were wealthy property owners. On 10 September 1840, Wilford Woodruff wrote in his diary concerning Herefordshire: "I rejoyce to find the work universally progressing with great rapidity upon every hand even some cases among the Nobility," but in this he was overly optimistic for there were few converts outside the working classes, and there is no evidence of any from the aristocracy.⁴²

³⁸George A. Smith, "History," 5 December 1840. See also Woodruff Journal, 3 October 1840.

³⁹Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, 27 May 1840. For a brief discussion of Manchester conditions, see Allen and Alexander, *Manchester Mormons*, pp. 14-20.

⁴⁰Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, 19 September 1840.

⁴¹Allen and Alexander, *Manchester Mormons*, p. 13; P. A. M. Taylor, "Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 22 (July 1954):260; Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, p. 149.

⁴²Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, pp. 149-50. Woodruff indicated that there was a "Lady Roberts of Nobility" who was interested in Mormonism, but she was probably from the gentry rather than the aristocracy and there is no evidence that she ever joined. See Woodruff Journal, 15 September 1840.

Perhaps one reason for Mormonism's success among the common people was the identification with the working classes felt by the American apostles, who were also workers by profession. In a letter to America dated 5 September 1840, Brigham Young and Willard Richards demonstrated great empathy with the poor in their criticism of the factory owners and the system of government taxes. They were horrified at the number of beggars and reported that all the spare change they had was given to the destitute.⁴³ The Twelve were intrigued by the factories, but they considered the industrial system to be exploitive. Following his tour through Copeland's pottery works, Wilford Woodruff reflected that the final step in the process of making fine china was the manufacturers' "aggrandizing themselves with the profits thereof."⁴⁴ Joseph Fielding and Theodore Turley visited a factory, and Fielding recorded in his diary: "I was much affected to see the Slavery that is there endured, the Dust, the bad Smell of oil, etc., the deafening Noise, and the confinement."⁴⁵ Brigham Young believed that "masters [i.e., factory owners] care little for their manufacturers, & have reduced the workers wage to almost the lowest extremity."⁴⁶

In some ways the apostles' view of the industrial society resembled socialist criticism of the same society, although it is clear that the Mormon leaders completely rejected socialism as a system. Significantly, however, socialism was becoming a force to be reckoned with in Europe and within the decade Friedrich Engels would publish his important work of propaganda on *The Condition of the Working Class in England*.⁴⁷ Engels wrongly predicted that the industrial abuses he saw would soon lead to a political upheaval even greater than the French Revolution and would result in the establishment of a socialist state. The apostles, on the other hand, saw the social turmoil as a sign of the times which foreshadowed the toppling of existing governments and the establishment of the

⁴³Young and Richards to First Presidency, 5 September 1840.

⁴⁴Woodruff Journal, 7 February 1840.

⁴⁵Fielding, "Diary," 14 July 1840.

⁴⁶Young and Richards to First Presidency, 5 September 1840.

⁴⁷For a translation with an excellent and well-balanced introduction see W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner, translators and editors, *Engels' The Condition of the Working Class in England*. One example of Mormon rejection of socialism came in April 1840, when John Taylor and Joseph Fielding attended some socialist meetings, but rejected the philosophy partly because they considered it atheistic. See Fielding, "Diary," 1-3 April 1840.

reign of Christ. As the workers who were drawn into socialism struggled for the establishment of a secular millenium, so those who came into Mormonism looked forward to a religious one.

One reason for Mormon success in Britain was the failure of the major religious bodies to attract working class converts. Even the Methodists, who had such success in the eighteenth century, had by the early years of Victoria's reign gained middle class "respectability" and no longer were active in missionary work among the working classes. Jabez Bunting, perhaps the greatest figure in the Methodist movement, admitted the "declining attendance of poor people at our services," and found "the main cause of their estrangement from us . . . [in] radicalism, infidelity and socialism."⁴⁸ The only major body of Christians that could claim a steady increase in adherents was the Catholics, but this was largely because of immigrants from Ireland. Thus the Mormons were one of the few successful religious bodies among the working classes, a fact that is only now gaining recognition among historians.⁴⁹

The Mormon missionaries had little good to say about organized religion in England. Brigham Young wrote to George A. Smith from Herefordshire that both a Baptist and a Methodist priest he had interviewed were "jest like the rest of the Priest they have jest relegon enuph to damb them no inclenation to even inquire after the gospel of Jesus Christ."⁵⁰ By the very nature of their religion the Mormons were anti-clerical, and they constantly railed against the evils of priestcraft. Brigham Young believed that English ministers were both ignorant and oppressive:

Neither have the priests much more information than the people, indeed there are many of the common people whom they dare not meet in argument, although they have their living [clerical benefices], thousands after thousands, & some of them own whole townships, or parishes & will tell their parishioners & tenants if they allow any one to preach in their houses they will be turned out of doors, or if they are baptized they will fare no better, & thus many

⁴⁸As quoted in William Reginold Ward, *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850* (London: Batsford, 1972), p. 240.

⁴⁹Ingliss, *Churches and the Working Classes*, p. 16; See Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966-70), Pt. I, pp. 436-39; John W. Dodds, *The Age of Paradox* (New York: Rinehart, 1952), pp. 28-29.

⁵⁰Brigham Young to George A. Smith, 4 May 1840.

simple souls who believe our message dare not be baptized, because they have not faith sufficient to screen them from the threats of an insolent priest or factory master knowing they will worry them to the utmost if they displease him, our hearts mourn for such. It is apprently starvation on one hand & domination on the other. The Lord have mercy upon them.⁵¹

But if the English clergy was lowly regarded by the apostles, the people of England were generally considered to be more receptive to the message of Mormonism than those in America:

We find the people of this land much more ready to receive the gospel than those of America . . . for they have not that speculative inteligence, or prejudice, or prepossession, or false learning, call it what you please. . . . Consequently we have not to labor with a people month after month to break down their old notions.⁵²

If this were true, the explanation does not lie in sudden conversions based on miracles, visions, or other dramatic spiritual experiences. Nor does it lie, as it did with many American converts, in the reading and accepting of the Book of Mormon, at least in 1840, for until the British edition was printed most new converts had never even seen it.⁵³ The best explanation must be sought in a special amalgamation of the social background of the converts themselves and the Mormon message, capped by whatever quiet spiritual confirmation was necessary finally to persuade them. It is important that many new converts, like their counterparts in America, could be classed as "seekers" in that they were already Christian fundamentalists before they heard the missionaries, had belonged to one or more churches, and were still seeking for more religious truth. Conversion did not come out of a religious vacuum.

⁵¹Young and Richards to First Presidency, 5 September 1840. See also letters of Lorenzo Snow to George A. Smith, 10 December 1840 and 19 January 1841. The latter is particularly caustic: "The Priests of Baal, however, bark and howl most ferociously; causing the true sheep to huddle together into the fold. . . . What fools these Priests are. Would they but keep silent their flocks would not discern their true character but the very moment they begin stirring themselves their long frightful ears and shaggy hair is disclosed at once and also their savage barks and fierce howls. The true sheep planely see their wolfish nature."

⁵²Young and Richards to First Presidency, 5 September 1840.

⁵³Heber C. Kimball lamented this fact to his wife in May when he wrote: "We are calculating to print the Book of Mormon. This will be done soon if the Lord will for we have great need of it, for the work of good is roling on in this Land in power. Thare is menny churches that have none, and never have seen any." Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, 27 May 1840.

A random sampling of Mormon converts in this period includes such people as John Needham, a draper who had been searching for religious conviction but was unable to find it in Methodism and finally joined the Mormons in 1838;⁵⁴ Paul Harris, shoemaker of Manchester, who opened his basement shop to the Mormons in 1838;⁵⁵ John Bourne, a potter and a Methodist, who was baptized by Alfred Cordon in 1839;⁵⁶ Richard Steele, a potter who had become interested in the Methodists as well as the Socialists, and who was already on a religious quest when he heard of the Latter-day Saints in 1839 and was baptized in January 1840;⁵⁷ William Barton, son of a printer but working in a Manchester factory when he and his parents were converted to Mormonism in November 1841;⁵⁸ John Freeman, whose efforts at employment took him into shoemaking, brickmaking, reaping, and itinerant singing in markets and fairs, and whose religious quest led him from the Baptists to the "Independents" and to the Christian Chartists before his conversion to Mormonism in 1844;⁵⁹ Sarah B. Layton, whose parents belonged to the laboring classes and who moved from the Methodist church to the Church of England and then, after her sister had joined the Mormons, was baptized on 1 January 1842;⁶⁰ and John Martin, a chimney sweep who was baptized in 1842.⁶¹ If this random sampling is in any way typical, the foregoing generalizations are confirmed.

Part of the attraction of Mormonism as it was taught in England may have been the simplicity of its forms and doctrines. It was not democratic, but it was simple and personal. Mormon ministry was strictly a lay ministry, and this was fully compatible with the practice of appointing lay preachers and missionaries by the Primitive Methodists, United Brethren, and

⁵⁴See John Needham, "Journal of John Needham," typescript, Church Historical Department.

⁵⁵See Richard Steele, "Journal of Richard Steele," microfilm copy of typescript, p. 6, and Needham, "Journal," p. 3, Church Historical Department.

⁵⁶John Bourne, "Journal of John Bourne," manuscript, Church Historical Department.

⁵⁷Steele Journal.

⁵⁸William Kilshaw Barton, "History of William Kilshaw Barton," typescript, Church Historical Department.

⁵⁹John Freeman, Journal, manuscript, Church Historical Department.

⁶⁰Sarah B. Layton, "Autobiography of Sarah B. Layton," *Woman's Exponent* 29(1900-01).

⁶¹John Martin, "Life of John Martin, Sr.," manuscript, Church Historical Department.

other reforming sects. In terms of attitude toward local leadership, then, many Mormon converts had little change to make; they needed only to accept the doctrine that priesthood authority had been divinely restored to Joseph Smith, and authoritatively passed to them through the missionaries. Former preachers such as Thomas Kington and James Palmer would, as had Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor in America, be converted one day and very quickly, perhaps even next day, find themselves ordained Mormon elders and assigned as leaders in the new faith. Their understanding of basic doctrine had not changed much—only their concept of priesthood authority.⁶²

The Mormon apostles also taught that in their church could be found a restoration of the ancient gospel of Christ, with essentially the same doctrine and organization. This could hardly help but strike a receptive chord in the minds of those familiar with the primitivism being taught by various reforming sects. Even such Mormon doctrines as apostolic authority, revelation, prophecy, and literal adherence to biblical ordinances were not new in England, and often Mormon teachings were thought to be akin to those of the Primitive Methodists or the Baptists.⁶³

Perhaps no Mormon doctrine spoke more familiarly to some British folk than millennialism. Fundamental to the theology of many groups, especially the dissenting sects, was not only a belief in the literal second coming of Christ, but also in the imminence of that event. It took little religious adjustment to accept the Mormon teaching that Christ would come again soon: only the concept that he would establish the Kingdom of God in America was different. The Mormons taught further, and with monumental self-assurance, that they would soon witness a millennial revolution. This is illustrated by what Parley P. Pratt wrote to Queen Victoria:

The world in which we live is on the eve of a *revolution*, more wonderful in its beginning, more rapid in its progress, more powerful in its operations, more extensive in its effects, more lasting in its influence, and more important in

⁶²In this connection it would be well to read Mario S. De Pillis, "The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1(Spring 1966):68-88. De Pillis' explanation of religious authority as one reason for Mormon success in America may well be equally applicable to England.

⁶³See Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Pt. I, p. 436; Taylor, *Expectations Westward*.

its consequences than any which man has yet witnessed upon the earth.⁶⁴

As part of this revolution, he testified, secular thrones as well as political and religious establishments would topple.

So expectant were the Mormon apostles that these were indeed the last days that they constantly looked for signs that would give further evidence that the winding up scenes had begun. In the *Millennial Star* Parley P. Pratt regularly published a column in which he reported news of disasters such as an earthquake in Scotland, a plague in the Middle East, volcanic eruptions in the West Indies, and other "supernatural" occurrences which signified the last days before the Second Coming. One such sign was a "perfect blood-red flag" seen flying in the sky above Hull. At intervals it changed its form and appeared as a "cross, a sword, and many other forms."⁶⁵

Predicting the coming of the great apocalyptic calamity, in which corrupt secular governments would be replaced by the Kingdom of God, Wilford Woodruff wrote:

it seems as though the Nations at the present time, were insane & their Kings, Presidents & Senators entirely destitute of all wisdom. But they will all Soon learn their is a God in Israel who is about to take peace from the Earth & cut of nations not a few for Grat Babylon is about to come in remembrance befor God.⁶⁶

He concluded that "It will be as much as we shall do to get out of Liverpool for New York before war overtakes us." There were at the time persistent rumors of possible war between England and the United States, related to Canadian-American border skirmishes around New York as well as a long-standing controversy over the boundary between Canada and Maine.

This immediate war scare only served to feed the belief that soon the entire world would be engulfed in a series of conflicts. But the final event preceding the Second Coming was the restoration of Israel. Parley P. Pratt believed that the corrupt Ottoman Empire was about to capitulate to demands from the various Protestant governments and agree to allow the Jews to return to their ancestral home.

⁶⁴Parley P. Pratt, *A Letter to the Queen of England* (Manchester: Parley P. Pratt, 1841), p. 2.

⁶⁵*Millennial Star*, 1:215.

⁶⁶Woodruff Journal, 17 February 1841.

Thus, all things seem preparing, in a political point of view, for the great restitution of Israel; and it is a matter of certainty that when the Jews gather home and rebuild Jerusalem, the second coming of Christ and the Millennium are just at the door. . . . We feel that the Second Advent is near, with the same assurance which we feel in regard to the near approach of summer when we see the trees put forth their leaves and blossom.⁶⁷

Wilford Woodruff wrote to Willard Richards two months before the main body of the apostles arrived in England, "I feel as though it will be a day of warning and not of many words to England. I think that what we do we shall do quickly."⁶⁸ As he prepared to leave his mission, he observed that "the Saints universally felt that the Judgments of God are near in this land & are anxious to gather with the Saints in Nauvoo as soon as possible."⁶⁹ Primitivism, millennialism, and cataclysm went hand-in-hand in Mormon doctrine, and this combination undoubtedly helped attract many who were already of similar persuasion.

But warning of impending doom could not alone have attracted the thousands of converts. Many undoubtedly were attracted because Mormonism spoke familiarly to them of fundamental first principles. "Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—Repentance—Baptism for the Remission of Sins—and the Gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands": these were the elements of the plan of salvation as "laid down in the New Testament" and taught by the Mormon elders.⁷⁰ In addition, the elders promised the gifts of the spirit. The faith of believers was often confirmed by witnessing speaking in tongues, healings, visions and dreams.⁷¹ Such doctrine provided sure hope for spiritual light and uplift in a world of chaos now, as well as eternal salvation hereafter, and thus spoke peace to the souls of prospective converts among the troubled working classes of Britain.

But the Mormon message went beyond such familiar con-

⁶⁷*Millennial Star*, 1:75.

⁶⁸Wilford Woodruff to Willard Richards, 3 February 1840.

⁶⁹Woodruff Journal, 15 March 1841.

⁷⁰Heber C. Kimball and Wilford Woodruff, "The Word of the Lord to the Citizens of London, of every sect and denomination . . ." tract printed in London, 1840.

⁷¹The journals and letters of the Twelve as well as of local members are replete with examples of such miraculous signs among the converts.

siderations. Its most unique element was belief in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, and to the apostles it was essential that this work be distributed in England. High import duties, however, made it impractical for many copies to be sent from America and as a partial remedy several key chapters were printed in the *Millennial Star* in 1840. But local publication was imperative and Brigham Young took personal charge of the project. In May 1840 he over-optimistically reported that the book would be in type in a few days,⁷² but actually it dragged out for another ten months. The committee solicited several bids in Liverpool and the final contract was awarded to J. Tomkins, who agreed to print five thousand copies for £210. John Benbow and Thomas Kington had already loaned Elder Young £250 and £100, respectively, for that purpose, but with all their other expenses the apostles found themselves appealing for still more funds.⁷³ Finally, on 21 February 1841, the Book of Mormon was made available to the British Saints. According to Brigham Young, all the money borrowed for the publication eventually was repaid through sale of the books.⁷⁴

Another special aspect of the Mormon message concerned emigration to America, the land of Zion. Emigration itself was not uncommon, for this era saw literally thousands of British citizens leave each year in search of better economic opportunities elsewhere.⁷⁵ Mormon emigration was thus only part of a well-defined pattern, although in this case it took on religious overtones. The pressure to emigrate, in fact, was heavy even before the apostles began officially to encourage it, but by the summer of 1840 an initial restriction was lifted and plans for emigration were under way.⁷⁶ The Saints were not required to go to America but little encouragement was needed, and under the direction of the apostles a vast emigration program

⁷²Brigham Young to Willard Richards and Wilford Woodruff, 24 May 1840.

⁷³On 7 September the generous John Benbow signed an agreement granting £250 for the printing of the hymn book and the Book of Mormon, except that as much of this money as necessary was to go first to assist certain emigrants. He also donated to the Church the proceeds from the Gadfield Elm Chapel, which he had sold. Bids for printing the Book of Mormon, receipts from the printer, and the Benbow agreement are in the Brigham Young papers.

⁷⁴See Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, p. 89, and Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:36.

⁷⁵Allen and Alexander, *Manchester Mormons*, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

was organized which lasted over half a century.⁷⁷ One can only speculate on the degree to which the economic ills of England, the already popular practice of emigration, and the encouragement often given to it by the government contributed to the attractiveness of Mormonism among the working classes. At least it can be said that this environment provided additional fertile soil for the Mormon message, which seemed to encourage emigration. It offered converts a definite place to gather where, working with the Saints, they could engage in building a literal Kingdom of God on earth.

MISSIONARY ORGANIZATION

How did the American apostles organize their work, and what proselyting techniques did they use? In July 1840, the Quorum organized itself into a traveling high council to visit the various areas in order to properly supervise the missionary work. In addition, volunteer full-time missionaries were chosen from among those Church members whose circumstances would permit them to devote themselves entirely to the work of the ministry. Hence, the number of missionaries was greatly expanded⁷⁸ and most new baptisms were performed by these local missionaries rather than by the apostles themselves. Another important development occurred in the October 1840 conference at Manchester, when it was decided that wherever a branch of the Church existed, two members were to be appointed to receive voluntary contributions for the support and clothing of missionaries. There was a difference, said Brigham Young, between preaching for money and providing the elders with their necessities while they were called to labor "without taking thought for the morrow."⁷⁹

As far as their own missionary methods were concerned, the apostles attempted to preach to large congregations. When new towns were opened for missionary labors they would seek out the local Methodist chapel, for example, and attempt to secure a speaking engagement before the congregation. In other instances they would attempt to preach before temper-

⁷⁷For the story of Mormon emigration in general, see Taylor, *Expectations Westward*; Gustive O. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom* (Francestown, New Hampshire: Marshall Jones, 1947); William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957).

⁷⁸*Millennial Star*, 1:70.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 1:168.

ance groups, and the temperance platform was often extended to them. They would address their audiences on the subject of temperance and then invite interested people to hear the gospel.⁸⁰

Wherever they went the apostles advertised their meetings by making announcements in other churches, posting handbills, and sending the message by word of mouth through Church members and friends. In Leek George A. Smith even hired the town criers to advertise a forthcoming meeting.⁸¹ They sometimes held public debates, although such spectacles were apparently not highly productive, and they frequently held American-style "camp meetings" as well as the traditional street meetings. In short, they held meetings whenever and wherever they could, preached to whoever would listen, and baptized in rivers, reservoirs or, in the case of London, in the public baths.

Opposition often arose from ministers who were attempting to save their flocks from the Mormons. The apostles singled out the Methodists as primarily responsible for inciting their congregations against the Saints, but also mentioned ministers from the Church of England, the Independents, and the Roman Catholics.⁸² Heber C. Kimball once wrote that the ministers were so agitated by Mormon success that they planned to petition the government to put an end to Mormon preaching.⁸³

Occasionally ministerial opposition was responsible for acts of hostility toward the missionaries. Theodore Turley reported that he was accosted by a mob who threatened to horsewhip him and then throw him into a coal pit.⁸⁴ At Bridgen, Wilford Woodruff was attacked with rotten eggs, one of which hit him but failed to break until it hit the ground.⁸⁵ Another hostile crowd pelted him with stones as he baptized five people.⁸⁶ On still another occasion he reported that Mr. John Symons, the rector at Dymock, was responsible for:

stirring up mobs against the Saints which had disturbed the meetings of the Saints in several instances, & on this oc-

⁸⁰See, for example, Woodruff Journal, 27 July 1840.

⁸¹George A. Smith, "History," 2 May 1840.

⁸²Fielding, "Diary," 26 July 1840 and 28 February 1841; George A. Smith, "History," 9 December 1840.

⁸³Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, 2 May 1840, Kimball papers.

⁸⁴Theodore Turley, Journal, 17 June 1840, manuscript, Church Historical Department.

⁸⁵Woodruff Journal, 20 March 1840.

⁸⁶Ibid., 9 April 1840.

casian as we began to gather together, the beat of drums, pails, pans & sticks was herd through the Street & the mob soon collected a Parraded in the Streets in front of the hous we closed the window shetters & doors in the room whare we are, & I opened meeting by singing & Prayer & no sooner had we commenced than the mob armed themselves with eggs, Bricks, rocks, & evry thing els they could lay their hands upon & began to throw they upon the house like a shower of hail stones for nearly an hour they dashed in the windows scattered Stones, Brick, & glass, through the rooms broke the tile on the roof & continued such depredations untill the close of the meeting.⁸⁷

But the social setting, the Mormon message, proselyting techniques, and opposition provide only part of the story of the Twelve in England. Not to be ignored as an essential element in their success was their personal commitment and the impact this had on the lives of people. The personal side of each of their lives is both touching and inspiring: Parley P. Pratt, for example, learning of the poverty and illness of his family and becoming so homesick that he crosses the Atlantic again to bring them to England; Willard Richards worrying about his frail wife whom he married while on his mission; Wilford Woodruff, the most intimate diarist of all, frequently pouring out his soul in the pages of his diary, probably believing that one day it would be an important source of inspiration; Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young, struggling more than any of the others with problems of writing and spelling, but leading out in the publication ventures of the group and spending long hours writing personal letters that in spite of their halting style carry an intensity of spirit that is indeed inspiring; all of the apostles struggling at first to keep enough money barely to exist, until through the contributions of members and the sale of books they were able to provide themselves with something approaching a comfortable living; and each of them having such impact on the lives of people that throngs gathered round them as they left, giving them tearful farewells reserved for only the most admired and beloved of friends.⁸⁸ A touch-

⁸⁷Ibid., 16 September 1840.

⁸⁸Another interesting sidelight is the fact that the American missionaries did not fail to go sightseeing, and the mission therefore probably contributed much to their personal cultural development. Woodruff's diary, for example, is replete with long descriptions, some of them possibly copied from tourist information, of some of the places he visited. Defending the practice—if, indeed, it needed defense—Woodruff, Kimball, and Smith wrote from London

ing excerpt from the papers of George A. Smith, the youngest apostle, beautifully typifies the attitude as well as the impact of the apostles. On 8 January 1841, he wrote his brother from the Staffordshire Potteries:

This cold Weather Makes me think of you as I have to sleep alone and find it vary cold but I have A good Bed and plenty of cloths to keep one man and the Night passes vary comfotably as I seldom go to Bed before 12 o clock and vary often Lay till 2 o clock in the Morning. This comes from my having So many Who come to hear me talk and receive instruction from me . . . you may well think I have to be A teacher of good Principles to them that Receive my testimony and you cannot think how foolish it makes me feel to Be Looked up to with So much Earnestness by Persons Who have been Professors of Religion and Preachers of the Different Sects. I thank the Lord for the Wisdom he has given me and the Success I have had in the teaching thes Men for there is Now in this District No less than 28 official Members in the Church and they all Look to me for instruction as children to A Father and this Makes me feel vary Small indeed and Causes me to cry unto my father Who is in heaven for Wisdom and Prudence to do my fathers Work and Sound his gospel to the World.⁸⁹

CULMINATION AND GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Joseph Smith could not have been more pleased with the accomplishments of the Twelve in England, but in October 1840, he counseled them to return home in the spring. "Having carried the testimony to that land," he wrote, "and numbers having received it, the leaven can now spread without your being obliged to stay."⁹⁰ His optimism was not misplaced.

on 28 October 1840: "As we consider it perfectly consistent with our calling, with reason and revelation, that we should form a knowledge of kingdoms and countries, whether it be at home or abroad, whether it be ancient or modern, or whether it be of things past present or to come, whether it be in heaven, earth or hell, air or seas; or whether we obtain this knowledge by being local or travelling, by study or faith, by dreams or by visions, by revelation or by prophecy, it mattereth not to us; if we can but obtain a correct principle and knowledge of things as they are, in their true light, past, present, and to come. It is under such a view of things that we are endeavoring to avail ourselves of every opportunity in our travels among the nations of the earth to record an account of things as they pass under our observation; extracts of which we may forward to you from time to time, which may not be uninteresting to your readers" (*Times and Seasons*, 2:261).

⁸⁹George A. Smith to Lyman Smith, 8 January 1841. See also Richard Rushton to George A. Smith, 25 September 1840. The George A. Smith file contains many letters from Rushton, his son, and others which demonstrate tender feelings for the young apostle.

⁹⁰HC 4:227. In the same letter Joseph expressed concern over possible

There were 5,814 Saints in Britain by the time the apostles left in April 1841 and another 800 had emigrated.⁹¹ For the next two decades missionary activity produced a steady flow of emigrants to America. While many people also fell away from the Church, its attraction was such that the number of new converts continued greatly to exceed the dropout rate. It was only after the issue of plural marriage received widespread attention in Britain that missionary success there began to wane.

When the apostles met in Liverpool to begin the journey homeward, they had an air of prosperity and success about them. The last few days before their departure were especially busy, with Saints arriving from all over England to sail with them for New York, the elders buying clothes and presents, and hundreds of Saints gathering to wish them fond farewell. As a result the Mormons were not ready to leave on time, but such was their newfound prestige that Wilford Woodruff and John Taylor were able to persuade the shipowners to delay the sailing for eight days. As Brigham Young later explained it, "they were urgent and anxious to oblige us, for we had chartered and fitted out several vessels and as our emigration promised to be a large business they wanted to carry us home."⁹² Wilford Woodruff confided a little more humbly in his diary: "Truly the Lord hath blessed us in a manner not looked for. It hath truly been a miracle what God hath wrought by our hands in this land since we have been here and I am astonished when I look at it."⁹³ The difference between all this and the arrival of the same men as eager but penniless and unnoticed missionaries a year earlier was indeed profound.

On 21 April 1841, seven apostles and 120 Mormon emigrants boarded the ship *Rochester* in Liverpool and set sail for America. As Wilford Woodruff habitually expressed it, they "took the parting hand" with Parley P. Pratt, who was to remain in England, and Orson Hyde, who had stopped in England on his way to Palestine.

But the apostles had one more surprise awaiting them, for as significant as their mission was to the gathering it had

armed conflict in Britain, and this may have been another reason he wanted the apostles home.

⁹¹HC 4:332; Parley P. Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), p. 314.

⁹²From an address given in Salt Lake City, 17 July 1870, *Journal of Discourses*, 13:12.

⁹³Woodruff Journal, 16 April 1841.

another important consequence for them: a consequence perhaps related to the great sense of solidarity and unity of purpose which they had achieved during that momentous year. Shortly after their return to Nauvoo Joseph Smith declared that henceforth the Twelve would be responsible not only for the affairs of the Church in the world, but for setting in order the affairs of the stakes also, an assignment which heretofore they had not received. In a sense, the apostles' mission to England was a trial by fire which helped prepare them for the increased administrative responsibilities to come. When informed of the new assignment, Brigham Young was disappointed, for this meant that he could no longer devote as much time to missionary work, but the leader of the successful British Mission accepted gracefully his augmented though unwanted responsibility.⁹⁴

Thus the mission of the Twelve to England ended, though the harvest would continue for years to come. In a period when Britain was experiencing chronic economic and social difficulties, the Mormon apostles and their co-workers presented an attractive alternative for many working-class Englishmen. More appealing to them than either the system they knew or a socialist utopia governed by the dictatorship of the proletariat was the gospel message of a millennial world government headed by Jesus Christ. The hardships and frustrations of the "hungry forties" could be set aside for the hope of building God's true Zion in the New World. The gospel principles preached by the representatives of Zion were readily believable for they were mostly familiar, and they satisfied an inner longing among some members of the working classes that they seemed unable to find in previous wandering from sect to sect. This, as much if not more than the uniqueness of Mormon doctrine, would seem to account for the impressive missionary success in 1840-41.

⁹⁴HC 4:403.