

BYU STUDIES



MORMONISM  
IN THE  
BRITISH ISLES  
1837-1987



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EDITORIAL INTERNS of *BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY STUDIES*

Karl F. Batdorff  
Lyle L. Fletcher  
Shirley R. Warren

Patricia Davis  
Jani Sue Muhlestein

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# Thoughts on the 150th Anniversary of the Church in the British Isles

Elder Marion D. Hanks

I have had a serious and ill-disguised affection for Britain for many years. Whether that comes because my ancestors were born in Hartley Bridge, Gloucester, England, and Hills Head, Lanarkshire and Fifeshire, Scotland, or from the wonderful blessing of having lived personally in the land for a time, I cannot say. I do not know whether it is heredity or environment. My feeling is that it is a blend of these elements, a blend which confirms me an anglophile for sure, and one incapable of not feeling deep and great emotion when I think warmly and fondly of my ties with the old countries.

What I will do in these moments is reminisce a bit and seek to share briefly with you just a little of what England means to me and calls to memory when I think of her and what she has done, and the influence and impact in my life and to my family, my Church, my community, my country, in the course of her own elegant history,

Her lovely language and her colorful vernacular,  
her regional and social-class dialects,  
her great literature, and  
her parks and greens and squares and roundabouts  
and buses and taxis,  
and trains;  
her theater, her humor;  
The verdure and the rugged grandeur of the south coasts,  
the heather of Scotland,  
the rock walls,  
the castles,  
the bogs and the beauty.  
Americans should be aware of Britain's illustrious history,  
her legacy to us concerning the rights of men,  
and the common law,  
and the inns of court,  
and her system of justice,  
And her very special people!



Our ties with Britain are and should be strong. For many years, for centuries, the Union Jack announced her formidable presence across the earth. Britannia ruled the waves; her colonies and her influence reached across the world. Colonialism contributed to civilizing and socializing many lands. We know mostly its flaws and failings and tragedies these days through the movie portrayals, but there is more to be said, and much that is said teaches us to be a little more thoughtful before we criticize or condemn.

#### LANGUAGE

The language and the vernacular and the dialects of Britain are exciting and stimulating to me. I could not listen to Peter Bates pray tonight, or to any British person speak, without a real sense of identification. I used to love to walk down Exhibition Road in London holding Richard's hand. He was less than two when we arrived, and he grew greatly during those early years, sharing not much of his father, but some, as we walked down the road to South Kensington and sometimes even over to Harrod's. I tried to share my amazement and the appropriate sense of personal limitation that I felt as we passed through those seas of faces of all hues and varieties. You never could tell what to expect. From an African or Indian face sometimes came the mellifluous outpouring of Oxfordian English. Astonishing! Or perhaps it issued from the roundsman delivering milk with his horse-drawn or electric-powered cart from which came our daily portion, he never comprehending how one house could dispose of the quantities of milk he brought. He did not understand the consumption capacity of a houseful of missionaries and children. We listened with fascination as a cab driver spoke the special language of the London street. The message from the Cockney workmen came to be decipherable after a while, but not easily. There were people from across the earth, and from Liverpool and the north of England, and Wales and Scotland—oh, those Scots!

The first words our missionary son heard at the door after his initial approach in Scotland were, "I dinna ken." The lady did not understand, and neither did he what she was saying. In my office I keep a delightful little engraved glass from Glasgow, the words speaking to me the language of my pioneer grandmother who lived nearly to the age of one hundred. She spent her last decade in my mother's home. Grandmother spoke of Hills Head and Paisley, her girlhood and joining the Church, and being invited never again to be in her mother's and father's home while she was a Mormon. On the little glass in my office are these beautiful engraved words: "Lang may your lum reek." "Long may your chimney smoke" is the message of good cheer and good wishes for warmth and food and future well being.



Even when one begins to hear the language of Britain more clearly, the words are not always the same, as, for instance, a few words I read in a newspaper article by Thomas Cheatham entitled “Why Can’t the British Speak English?”

You can’t get gas for the car in England, the garbageman never comes and it’s impossible to find a restaurant with dessert on the menu.

For gas, garbageman and dessert, read “petrol,” “dustman” and “sweets.”

Babies wear nappies, not diapers, sleep in cots, not cribs, and put on jumpers, not sweaters, before they go to the common or green (park) to play. You bath, not bathe, a baby in Britain.

Cheatham goes on to point out other differences between English and American usage: “You don’t vacuum your apartment, you Hoover the flat. With luck, the building will have a lift (elevator), a porter (janitor) and roundsmen (deliverymen) who bring goods in their lorries (trucks).” And so forth and so forth.

#### LITERATURE

For the first year of my college life, several nights a week, I chipped ice and served fountain drinks, and on occasion acted as bouncer, and cleaned up and walked home at one in the morning from the downtown dance place where many of my fellow classmates in the English department at the University of Utah had been dancing with their girls (and mine). During these eventful evenings, I would endeavor each night to memorize fifty lines of Shakespeare to satisfy the expectations of Dr. Sherman Neff in that upper-division English class I had naively entered. Sherman Neff, then in advanced years, had studied at Harvard with the great George Lyman Kittredge. He was one of the memorable teachers of English literature, and he could not recite the lines without uncontrollable exultation, or sometimes tears. I still seek repose on occasion repeating to myself the magnificent soliloquy from *Henry IV*:

How many thousand of my poorest subjects  
Are at this hour asleep! O sleep, O gentle sleep!  
Nature’s soft nurse, how have I frightened thee,  
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,  
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?  
Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,  
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,  
And hush’d with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,  
Than in the perfum’d chambers of the great,  
Under the canopies of costly state,  
And lull’d with sound of sweetest melody?

(pt. 2, act 3, sc. 1, lines 4–14)

That magnificent piece ends with better known lines:



Canst thou, O partial sleep, give then repose  
 To the wet [sea-boy] in an hour so rude,  
 And in the calmest and most stillest night,  
 With all appliances and means to boot,  
 Deny it to a king? Then happy low, lie down!  
 Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!  
 (*Henry IV*, pt. 2, act 3, sc. 1, lines 26–31)

Missionaries arriving in London in our time were exposed, in their orientation period, not only to current local mores and missionary methods, but to something of Britain's history, and especially her marvelous heritage of literature. In their initial indoctrination sessions in our mission home, they heard in a brief hour or so, many of them for the first time, the magnificence of Shakespeare, listening to the voices of great British actors reading the lines, a copy of which they held in their own hands, from such magnificent moments as King Henry the Fifth's powerful address to his troops the night before the Battle of Crispin, St. Crispin's Day.

That moving moment ends in the British camp. The king is approached by Salisbury who tells him the French armies are about ready to charge. The king answers: "All things are ready, if our minds be so" (*Henry V*, act 4, sc. 3, line 71).

I cannot believe that any human, young or old, even ill disposed to Shakespeare by some insensitive teacher, could resist for long the power of King Henry's charge to his troops before Harfleur. You must know something of it. It begins:

Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more;  
 Or close the wall up with our English dead!  
 (*Henry V*, act 3, sc. 1, lines 1–2)

But more than the wars commend the Bard. I still chuckle through the night with Falstaff and repeat with Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*:

Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous  
 That there shall be no more cakes and ale?  
 (act 2, sc. 3, lines 114–16)

And I still sorrow over missed opportunities and remember loved friends with some little known lines from Brutus spoken on the field of battle as he salutes his dead friend Cassius, who has taken his life mistakenly believing the battle lost to Antony and Octavius. Brutus looks upon his friend and says:

Friends, I owe moe tears  
 To this dead man than you shall see me pay.  
 I shall find time, Cassius; I shall find time.  
 (*Julius Caesar*, act 5, sc. 3, lines 101–3)



During an occasional political race I quote the Bard: "There's small choice 'twixt rotten apples" (*The Taming of the Shrew*, act 1, sc. 1, line 26).

I would fondly wish my own and all other people's children could be so fortunate as to have such fare, and Byron and Milton and Tennyson, upon which to correct the imbalance, the less nutritious material we sometimes permit inside our heads through our ears and our eyes.

#### HUMOR

The humor of the British is legendary. One or two wry remembered examples must do. The staid London *Times* never acknowledged making an error, or that there was a possibility she could do so. The paper printed an obituary one day which the reputed decedent read and disputed. He called the *Times* to register his complaint. "Oh yes," said the person at the *Times*, "and from where are you calling?"

During the year of the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of America's Declaration of Independence, Maxine and I walked through an exhibit at Greenwich saluting the heroes of the revolutionary incident from the British standpoint. On display—though it was not very funny then, the effect of it two hundred years later certainly is—was a letter from one Captain W. G. Evelynn, of the Fourth Foot Regiment of the British Army, describing his colonial American foes to his wife:

They are the most absolute cowards on the face of the earth, yet they are just now worked up to such a degree of enthusiasm and madness that they are easily persuaded that they must be invincible.

You get the feeling that those "absolute cowards" were making it a little tough for the Fourth Foot Regiment. You have to wonder what effect America's repeated celebrations—for the Declaration of Independence, the Statue of Liberty, and the Constitution—have on the British now. With their challenging problems, the British probably don't need to be reminded time and again of the historic humiliation two centuries ago.

But I was taken and touched and not surprised by the good humor of Ivor Richard, Britain's chief delegate to the United Nations, who observed in one sentence both the British feeling and the facts of history:

You are celebrating—and we are tolerating—certain events which happened two hundred years ago which, I hasten to add, we now recognize as probably irreversible.

For two hundred years we have behaved like fond family with Britain, and for that long have been occasionally gently twitting her. One reported encounter at Versailles in 1797 involved the ambassadors from France and Britain, and Benjamin Franklin from the United States. The British ambassador raised his glass in a toast to King George III,



who, he said, like the sun cast the beneficent and warming glow of his splendid countenance across the earth. The French ambassador toasted Louis XVI, who, he said, like the moon, cast the beneficent and blessed light of his countenance across the world. Benjamin Franklin slowly stood and toasted George Washington, who, he said, like Joshua of old, commanded the sun and the moon to stand still, and they did.

#### BRITAIN'S LEGACY

Our legacy from this land? We salute Britain with love and thank God and our motherland for what she bequeathed us in her common law (had I gained nothing more than that from those years of toil in law school, it would be a marvelous blessing), her Magna Carta, and the work and writings of her great jurists and lawyers. The common law is judges' law, law that came from court cases as opposed, basically, to the Roman law, the civil law which was canonized and came in statutory form. The common law grew, and that was our heritage. It became our basic law.

We salute Britain for her incalculable contribution to the Church, and for the foundations of personal heritage upon which many of us stand. We salute her for what she means now and here to us and our own family, who learned as little children to appreciate and respect and love another country and another people beyond their own native shores.

It is to be remembered that the American colonists were citizens of Britain, most of them only gradually and over years entertaining thoughts of separation. Wise men in England sought earnestly to avoid losing the colonies. But an arbitrary king, a parliament that would not listen, and Providence ruled otherwise, and the foundations of freedom were laid.

Mellen Chamberlain relates in his book *John Adams, the Statesman of the American Revolution* a conversation he had with a Yankee soldier sixty-seven years after the battle of Concord and Lexington:

Q: My histories tell me that you men of the revolution took up arms against intolerable oppressions.

A: What were they, oppressions? I didn't feel them.

Q: What, were you not oppressed by the Stamp Act?

A: I never saw one of those stamps . . . I am certain I never paid a penny for one of them.

Q: Well, what then about the Tea Tax?

A: Tea Tax? I never drank the stuff; the boys threw it all overboard.

Q: Then I suppose you have been reading Harrington or Sidney and Locke about the eternal principle of liberty.

A: Never heard of them. We read only the Bible, the Catechism, Watt's Psalms and Hymns, and the Almanack.

Q: Well then what was the matter? And what did you mean in going to the fight?

A: Young man, what we meant in going for the redcoats was this: we had always governed ourselves, and we always meant to. They didn't mean we should.



I went once to Williamsburg, Virginia, with Richard L. Evans and Cannon Young, the great Church architect, with whom I was associated in the leadership of Temple Square. We were pursuing ideas for the Visitors' Center then in contemplation and now standing in the northwest corner of that great ten acres. In Williamsburg a film was used to illustrate the intense conflict in the hearts of loyal colonists who loved their homeland but who valued freedom more. Let me give you the briefest sketch of that film, which I presume and hope is still being shown.

I saw my beloved friend Richard Evans weep openly only twice over many years, once at the funeral of one of my choice missionaries who had grown up in the ward with Brother Evans's sons. He came home a hero in a coffin from a tragic war. Elder Evans and I spoke at his funeral. We wept together as his missionary companions carried the coffin of our beloved young brother into that overflowing chapel. Richard also wept at the conclusion of the film at Williamsburg.

The film began with a wonderful young plantation owner, perhaps in his late thirties or early forties. He was with his elderly patrician mother at the graveside of his father, buried in the designated grounds on their Virginia plantation. He was bidding his mother farewell as she departed for England. They are Tories, English.

The evolution of this young man from patriotic Englishman to free American was so tastefully and marvelously done that I could not forget. Step by step, incident by incident, indignity upon indignity, the feeling grew that America must be a free nation. Scenes in the House of Burgesses, in the taverns, in public meetings, radiated the rising tempo. The concluding scene occurs outside the beautiful House of Burgesses in Williamsburg where the young father, at a recess before the final vote was taken that would commit Virginia to the cause of freedom with the other colonies, approaches his son on the greensward. The father puts his arm around the shoulders of his boy and explains to him the meaning of the vote he is about to cast in the Virginia legislature and the consequences for his son that would surely attend it. "It is your future I am voting," he says, "and I want you to tell me how you want me to cast that vote."

The lad, early in his teens, replies, "Father, I have already cast my vote." At that moment a rough voice shouts, "Fall in," and the lad picks up a rude musket and moves into the ranks of boys and men marching off to meet the redcoats of the British Crown. An Englishman had become an American as a colonial lad marched off to fight and die for the right to be free.

Several years ago a British scholar addressed the students of Brigham Young University at a forum assembly. President Holland, sharing our love for Britain, was kind enough to provide a copy of that talk for me. Here is an excerpt:



Freedom is indivisible and the enemies of freedom are universal. Just as the Pilgrim fathers came to America to live their free life, and your Mormon converts until recently came to Salt Lake City to live their free life, let us remember that the history of the English-speaking peoples is still interwoven, that our liberties are yours and yours are ours, and that only by recalling our great histories and what we have jointly done for the freedom of mankind will our two peoples combine to defend liberty in the future. Compared with this great charge, our differences are as minimal as those that exist among close relatives in the best-run families. Britain is neither down nor out.

Differences, yes, but minimal, yes. And for both the United States and England remains the heritage and the support. A line from one of the venerated men in our educational history, Nicholas Murray Butler, speaks to my heart:

It has never been and is not now possible for me to land in England or to be on English, or rather, British, soil without a feeling of exultation. It must be the ancestral blood which manifests itself in instinct and emotion, but England and Scotland are in my case the old homeland where everything seems familiar and upon which everything that happened in the world for hundreds of years seems chiefly to be built.

And then a line or two from Shakespeare that reach my heart about England:

This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea.

(*Richard II*, act 2, sc. 1, lines 40–46)

Can some of you hear Selvoy Boyer warmly declaring his love for the “great green island,” waving his bent finger at the congregation? With him we say with Browning in “Home Thoughts from Abroad”:

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now!

I have to share, and with it say a multitude of things I am not going to say, the contents of a note I wrote at a meeting at Romford, England, 16 December 1962:



Brother Mosdell sustained the officers. Brother Vousden spoke of tithing, the budget, the building, the fast offering, and the “stiffnecked” people who resist the Lord. Brother Edmunds spoke and Brother Ferrari and then a bobby, a British police officer, a handsome, rugged convert. He told the story of “a godly woman, a wonderful woman dying in the hospital, so much pain in her face. She repeated the 23rd Psalm. As she finished, the pain passed and she said, ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth,’ and then she died. There was a boy there, not as old as Joseph Smith was. He wondered as the woman died but did nothing more. He did not cry. He did not pray. That boy now wishes that he had. I am that boy, and the godly woman was my mother. A few months ago the missionaries knocked on our door. The Lord blessed me and made known to me the truth. I know that God lives and this is His Church. I know that my Redeemer lives.”

Thank God for Britain, and faith, and vision, and courage almost incredible to me: a convert grandmother who in her late teens was told by her father that her name would never again be spoken in the household and who emigrated and then waited thirty or forty years to go back on a short-term mission, not knowing whether she would be accepted. No answer had come to her importunings. Her father stood at the corner of the fence, his white hair blowing in the breeze, her stern father. She walked that last block, her heart in her throat, her palpitations leaving her hardly able to speak. He opened his arms and said, “Ellen, my Ellen,” and they were reconciled. She stayed and taught her family and came home to live another forty years in her adopted land.

We love Britain for a lot of reasons. I am grateful for the thinking and the reading and the feeling I have been privileged to enjoy in anticipation of this tender moment. The shortness of the journey and the closeness of the ties we have with our past was illustrated for me as I read a brief history of the Church in Kent County, England, prepared by the local people there. The following entry is recorded:

On the 19th of July 1855 President William H. Kimball wrote to the editor of the *Millennial Star* a letter in which he mentioned meeting, at the end of June, Elder Broderick, the Travelling Elders and Priesthood of the Kent Conference in a new meeting room built expressly for the Saints in Faversham. He also mentioned sending Elders to labour in the neighbourhood of Tunbridge Wells. Later in the year he was reporting that the Priesthood were in good spirits.

In 1962 as president of the British Mission I sent good missionaries into Tunbridge Wells to labor in the area and to organize a branch. The last I learned, the priesthood were in good spirits. May there “always be an England.” In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.



# Gadfield Elm Chapel

*First meetinghouse owned by the Church in Britain*

Tucked obscurely in the corner  
Of some farmer's field  
The small, stone chapel dwindles  
With no apparent honor.

The walls are crumbling, slowly,  
Flooded by a rising tide of slender weeds.  
The grey slate roof lies slumped upon the floor  
In uncontested disarray.

It is a pale, unlikely sanctuary  
For the word of God.

That spoken word  
Once transformed itself into the air  
Our forebears breathed,  
The blood, that even after several generations,  
Pulses quick in recognition  
Of the mildest echo still abiding here

A gently simmering catalyst inviting us  
To witness  
And to praise.

—Randall L. Hall



# Church Growth in the British Isles, 1937–1987

Elder Derek A. Cuthbert

It is an occasion for great jubilation that the 150th anniversary year has now dawned for the Church in the British Isles. As a British convert I am proud and grateful to be a product of the sustained missionary effort that has gone forth for a century and a half in my beloved Britain. A few months ago, in the Kirtland Temple, I sat where Heber C. Kimball, in June 1837, received a mission call from the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith to “go to England and proclaim my Gospel, and open the door of salvation to that nation.”<sup>1</sup> How grateful I am that he responded, becoming the first missionary and the first mission president of the British Mission.

Over the intervening years of the first century, wave upon wave of dedicated missionaries, totaling more than six thousand, did proclaim the gospel throughout Great Britain, bringing a harvest of over one hundred thousand converts. However, most of these emigrated to the land of Zion, and by the centennial year of 1937 there were only 6,300 members left in their native land. Richard L. Evans, in his *A Century of “Mormonism” in Great Britain*, could rightly ponder: “It is intriguing to think that, but for the spirit of gathering and its attendant mass emigration of British converts, the Church in the British Isles might already have become numerically strong as it has in America.”<sup>2</sup>

Barely two years later, the Second World War broke out, and all the missionaries were withdrawn. Despite the calling of over four hundred “home missionaries,” only two hundred converts were baptized during the six war years. Although there was a small buildup in the postwar years, the ravages of war had taken their toll. Thus, when my wife and I joined the Church in January 1951, membership was still only 6,500.

Fortunately, 1951 was the turning point. The British Mission had been in existence for 114 years, and its history up to this point had largely been one of great spiritual missionary experiences in teaching,

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Elder Derek A. Cuthbert is a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This talk was presented at “The Church in the British Isles, 1837–1987,” a symposium held at Brigham Young University, 17 January 1987. Portions of this address were taken from Elder Cuthbert’s book *The Second Century: Latter-day Saints in Great Britain*, vol. 1, 1937–1987.



converting, baptizing, and emigrating. Now the scene had to change. A generation of British Saints had to be raised up who would remain British and become a mighty people in their native land, just as their forebears had become a mighty people in the Rocky Mountains.

Since I have been personally involved in every phase of the exciting saga of Church growth in the British Isles, I would like to present a brief review of what great things the Lord has accomplished there in more recent times. My vision has expanded through service in my native land, as branch, district, and stake president, as counselor to four mission presidents, and as a Regional Representative, mission president, and General Authority. The analysis of some key Church statistics, which I will now present, has been cleared by the First Presidency both for presentation here and for inclusion in my book, *The Second Century: Latter-day Saints in Great Britain*. There are four subject headings, namely: membership and leadership growth, convert baptism growth, growth in number of Church units and new meetinghouses, and organization of British stakes.

#### MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP GROWTH

Growth during the first thirteen years, 1937–50 was negligible, both in membership and leadership. Times were hard, and the net increase in members was only ninety-three and in Melchizedek Priesthood twenty-six. The average number of local elders in a branch was four, representing less than 5 percent of membership.

The period 1950–55 brought my first Church experiences. In 1950, almost all of the ecclesiastical leadership in the British Isles, at branch and district level, consisted of full-time missionaries. This was due mainly to a century of emigration followed by the static years of the Second World War. The need to raise up local leaders brought a speeding up in preparation to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. For example, I was baptized 27 January 1951 and ordained an elder 21 October 1951—nine months later, as were a number of my contemporaries. Whereas only 5.2 percent of total membership held the Melchizedek Priesthood in 1950, this had been increased to 6.1 percent in 1955 with an average of seven elders per branch. This was vital to the building up of the Church in the 1950s, for with the Korean War the number of full-time missionaries dropped rapidly from 250 in 1950 to ninety in 1953.

During the second half of the fifties, which included the first two years of President David O. McKay's "New Era," even though the baptismal rate increased dramatically, several factors helped to maintain the rate of increase in Melchizedek Priesthood. These included the organization of the first elders quorums in 1955, emphasis on preparing Aaronic Priesthood young men to receive the higher priesthood, and



reclamation of an increasing number of prospective elders, who at that time were designated as Senior Aaronic Priesthood.

During 1960–65, the tremendous increase in membership brought a breakthrough in terms of size of congregations, organization of the first six stakes, and an extension in the scope of all Church activities. However, whereas Church membership increased by almost threefold, from nineteen thousand to seventy-one thousand, leadership potential, as measured by the number of Melchizedek Priesthood, only rose by 1.3-fold. The three great challenges during this period were to retain the burgeoning membership, build meetinghouses to accommodate them, and provide necessary curriculum and other materials. We successfully met the latter two challenges, but failed in our convert retention because of the disparity between the growth rates in membership and leadership. The Melchizedek Priesthood percentage dropped drastically to 3.5 percent even though the number rose from 1,100 to 2,500.

The period 1965–70 was a time of consolidation, with more emphasis on baptizing families rather than youth. Convert baptisms settled down at a rate of just under three thousand a year, which continued until the 1980s. It became possible to “catch up” a little on Melchizedek Priesthood ordination, which reached 4.2 percent of membership by 1970, but there were still only thirteen Melchizedek Priesthood holders per unit. Only two new stakes were organized, there having been a five-year break from 1964 through 1968 with no new stakes.

Great strides were made in the next fifteen years, 1970–85, with the percentage of Melchizedek Priesthood increasing to 5.2 percent by 1975, 6.2 percent by 1980, and 6.5 percent by 1985. Even more crucial was the fact that the average number of Melchizedek Priesthood in each unit was now up to twenty-four. The work of the Regional Representatives (from 1967 on) and resident General Authorities (from 1975 on) were important contributory factors. The first area general conference in 1971, and a subsequent series in 1976, were also very significant in bringing maturity as the Church, in the words of President Joseph Fielding Smith, “came of age.”

Now, in 1987, we have excellent leaders heading the forty stakes and almost four hundred wards and branches, but depth of leadership is still inadequate with less than half the strength compared with Church units in the western United States.

#### CONVERT BAPTISM GROWTH

As has already been stated, the years from 1937 to 1950 were lean years with 1,300 baptisms, averaging one hundred per year. During the 1930s there were only fifty missionaries in Britain, among a population of over fifty million. Although they tried to get into the public eye with



the Millennial Chorus and championship basketball to augment door-to-door tracting, the impact was relatively small.

The period 1950–54 brought the beginning of a change. Up to 1950, missionaries in Great Britain had no formal teaching plan. It was a breakthrough when the Anderson Plan, developed in the Northwestern States Mission, was adapted for Britain. In conjunction with increased use of the Book of Mormon in tracting, this gave a tremendous boost to proselyting. Missionary numbers were also building up, reaching two hundred and fifty by the end of 1951, the largest missionary force yet seen. Unfortunately, the Korean War draft drastically changed the situation. By the close of 1952 the number of missionaries had dropped to 150, and a year later there were only ninety. However, President McKay's 1951 challenge for every member to be a missionary, followed by the mission president's call for district missionaries, moved proselyting forward, despite the lack of full-time missionaries. In fact, 1951, with almost one thousand convert baptisms, was the most productive year for forty-three years, the average since 1900 being only three hundred baptisms a year.

During the period 1955–59, convert baptisms continued to build gradually. A significant acceleration came after President McKay's "New Era" challenge in 1958, with 1,200 baptisms in the twelve months following dedication of the London Temple. Building on the district missionary emphasis of Presidents A. Hamer Reiser and Clifton G. M. Kerr, President T. Bowring Woodbury called for 5 percent of total membership to serve on district missions. Within fifteen months, more than six hundred members had answered the call, and in their first year of service they baptized three hundred converts.

The years 1960–64 were a golden era when the British Mission, which had remained intact since 1837, was divided into no less than nine missions! Missionary numbers multiplied rapidly from 190 to 880 in two years, and by the end of 1964 topped one thousand. Baptisms exceeded forty thousand over the five years, representing a tenfold increase. This was the highest level achieved to date, including the 1840s and 1850s, and it has not been exceeded since.

The doubling of Church membership in Britain during the 1950s, from seven thousand to fourteen thousand, represented an annual growth rate of around 10 percent; this could be handled fairly easily. The first four years of the 1960s, however, saw annual convert growth of almost 40 percent, and the warning bells began to ring. It was exciting but overwhelming, exhilarating but demanding.

I would like to reiterate at this point that three great challenges were now thrust upon us. First was the need to integrate new members, whose influx became almost a deluge, considering the small base from which the Church was starting. Second came the need to accommodate these



new Saints, and our facilities were inadequate, catering for one hundred small congregations in a population approaching sixty million. Third was a desperate need for supplies and curriculum materials. Previously, we could “get by” with simple fellowshipping, converted houses, and a few manuals, often recycled year to year. Now, new challenges called for new methods. Solutions to the three challenges needed to be found. Indeed, they were found, and the outcome was even more exciting than the prospect of starting again in a new land. The British Saints were starting again in their own land.

By 1965 the pendulum had swung too far, and during that year two of the new missions, Northeast British and North Scottish, were discontinued. I have already referred to 1965–69 as a period of consolidation, and this continued into the next decade. Emphasis was placed on baptizing families rather than youth, and baptisms settled down to a rate of three to four thousand per year.

From 1975 to 1984, missionary work in Britain was supervised by a resident General Authority, and this was a positive factor in bringing about a quickening during the early 1980s. This, coupled with more aggressive proselyting, particularly in northern and south-western England, brought baptisms up to a peak of five to six thousand a year. Many newly baptized adult members were called as “finding missionaries,” with much success.

During the past two years, 1985–86, under the supervision and training of the Europe Area Presidency, member-missionary participation has increased. Convert baptisms have averaged four thousand per year, and are increasing.

#### GROWTH IN NUMBER OF CHURCH UNITS AND NEW MEETINGHOUSES

From 1937 until the 1960s, the growth in number of Church units was very gradual. Such growth comes either from rapid growth in existing units necessitating division or from opening new proselyting areas. With only one mission covering the whole country, neither of these developments could take place. Indeed, it took twenty-three years to increase from sixty-seven branches to one hundred wards and branches.

Although the Saints at that time met almost exclusively in old converted houses and rented halls, there was a constant desire to upgrade. I remember that in 1954, for example, the call came from the mission president for every branch to have a building and maintenance fund. “Thermometers” were placed on each notice board, showing the rising bank balance.

The creation of the Hyde Park Branch in London was a historic occasion, since this was the one hundredth unit. The building program was not yet launched, although the Hyde Park chapel, commenced in



August 1959, was dedicated in February 1961—the portent of things to come. It is interesting to note that Elder Marion G. Romney, of the Council of the Twelve, broke ground, European Mission President Alvin R. Dyer laid the cornerstone, and President David O. McKay performed the dedication of this outstanding edifice.

During the period 1960–65, the massive growth of over fifty thousand members, together with the opening up of many new proselyting areas, necessitated the organization of 176 new units. These stretched from Helston in Cornwall to Thurso in the north of Scotland—literally from “Land’s End to John O’ Groats.” The West European Mission was set up, with N. Eldon Tanner as president, to handle the affairs of the growing Church in Britain. The distribution of Church supplies was launched through Deseret Enterprises, of which I was privileged to be the general manager. In March 1961, the Church building program started to move forward in a miraculous way. Over the next six months, fourteen meetinghouse projects were commenced and sixty-three sites purchased! By the end of 1965, fifty-four new meetinghouses had been completed.

The number of units plateaued during the consolidation years of 1965–75, although eighty new chapels were completed during this period. This average construction rate of eight new chapels each year has, in fact, been achieved during the entire twenty-five years of the building program and has done much to enhance the image of the Church throughout the country.

The last decade has brought a second upsurge in the creation of new wards and branches, which undoubtedly will continue. There is now a solid momentum, and the “Kingdom of God [is going] forth that the kingdom of heaven may come” (D&C 65:6). The average unit membership is now over 370, four times the size of the branches fifty years ago. It should be noted that in the British Isles, as in many overseas areas, the optimum ward size is lower than in the United States.

#### ORGANIZATION OF BRITISH STAKES

From the time the British Mission was organized in 1837 until the first stake was created in 1960, the mission president had ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the total Church membership in the British Isles. When my wife and I joined the Church in 1951, the members were contained in seventy-seven branches, which in turn were organized into fourteen mission districts. There was not much talk of stakes in the early 1950s, although we were challenged to strengthen the branches to become more like wards. Then, in the last two years of the decade, following the dedication of the London Temple in 1958, the quest for stakehood began in earnest.



The only areas which had the necessary strength of membership and leadership were Northern England, with Manchester, Liverpool, and Leeds districts; the Northeast, where the Newcastle District was shaping up well; the Midlands, including the Nottingham and Birmingham districts; and Greater London, where two districts were now organized. As it transpired, the first stake established in the British Isles was the Manchester Stake, organized in March 1960 by Elder Harold B. Lee. Within a year, three more had followed: London Stake, organized by President David O. McKay, and Leicester and Leeds stakes by Elder Hugh B. Brown. In each case, mission districts had to be combined to provide sufficient strength.

The decade of the sixties brought seven stakes, with twenty-three in the seventies and ten thus far in the eighties for a total of forty stakes covering the entire country. These had evolved from fourteen small mission districts with an average of five hundred members each in just thirty-five years!

The first stake in Scotland was organized in August 1962 in Glasgow by President David O. McKay. This was a most remarkable achievement since total membership in Scotland in 1960 was stated to be less than a thousand. Northern Ireland reached stakehood in June 1974, when President Ezra Taft Benson organized the Belfast Northern Ireland Stake. Wales was not far behind, with a stake centered in Merthyr Tydfil, created by Elder Bruce R. McConkie in January 1975.

The two most productive years to date for the organization of stakes were 1973 with five and 1982 with six new stakes. One of the most significant occasions was in June 1982, when the last mission district in Britain was absorbed into the new Chester England Stake. The only members of the Church from the old British Mission area still to receive the blessings of stakehood are those in the Republic of Ireland, and they are making steady progress towards this goal.

President Spencer W. Kimball's vision of one hundred stakes in Great Britain was first made known when there were only six! It could well be that by the end of the twentieth century there will be eighty, and another vision will open up.

#### CONCLUSION

Now, fifty years since the centennial celebration, we can look back with gratitude at the great things the Lord has accomplished through the British Saints. Where sixty-seven branches stood in 1937, there are now almost four hundred wards and branches. Instead of fourteen small mission districts in one mission, we have forty stakes, eight missions, and one remaining mission district. Membership has soared from 6,000 to 140,000, and those holding the Melchizedek



Priesthood has risen from three hundred to nine thousand. This transformation is a “marvelous work and a wonder,” to use the Prophet Isaiah’s words. To have been part of it has been a most rewarding experience, and the writing of it is the fulfillment of a dream.

During the past twelve months of sorting and sifting, reminiscing and reviewing, I have made some conclusions about the Church in Britain. First, the British Isles are favored of the Lord and have a special place in his latter-day plans. Heber C. Kimball recorded in his journal that according to the Prophet Joseph Smith, “ancient prophets had blessed the land.”<sup>3</sup> Modern-day prophets have done likewise. Of the thirteen wonderful brethren who have served as Presidents of the Church, ten served as missionaries in the British Mission—all except Joseph Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Spencer W. Kimball. Just as these great men have proclaimed the gospel in Britain, so others have been raised up to take the gospel from British shores to many nations. These islands have a divine destiny, and the quickening during the past half century is indicative of greater things to come.

Second, as Spencer W. Kimball declared on a September morn in 1969 on the Malvern Hills, “There are many still to gather.” The harvest of souls in the fifty years since 1937 has already greatly exceeded that of the previous hundred years. The setting up of the Missionary Training Center within the precincts of the London Temple is an important development in the training of British and European missionaries more effectively. By the end of the second century, there could be half a million British Saints and two hundred stakes. Yes, the blood of Israel is richly concentrated in these islands, and the promised blessings will all be fulfilled.

Third, the British and the Irish are proud peoples, and their quest for self-sufficiency has made significant strides in recent years, in both financial self-sufficiency and self-sufficiency in missionary and temple work. Basic welfare principles have been taught increasingly over the last two decades, with work, self-reliance, provident living, and Christian service to the fore. The meeting of welfare responsibilities is a sign of increasing maturity as personal and family preparedness has increased. The emergency needs of others are now met through the storehouse resource system established during this decade. Bishops’ storehouses, volunteer employment offices, and an LDS social services agency handle special needs.

Fourth, the war years stemmed the flow of emigrants and showed the British Saints what they could do on their own. It took several years to build up the leadership needed to make the breakthrough to stakehood, but there was no looking back. Similarly, the way in which over four hundred Saints responded to the call for “home missionaries” during those dark days was an important precedent. Twenty years later,



5 percent of the greatly increased membership were called to serve as district missionaries, and over six hundred responded.

The call by President Benson in October 1986 to strengthen the stake missions should be given the same priority. This would result in over four thousand stake missionaries being called, or an average of one hundred per stake. This, coupled with increased use of the Book of Mormon, will give the greatest impetus to missionary work yet seen.

Fifth, the London Temple has been the means of raising up a covenant people in the British Isles, a people committed to living righteously and serving their fellow men and women. The dedication of the temple in 1958 was truly the beginning of a "New Era" for the British Saints. Almost four million ordinances have been performed in the temple from the time of dedication to the present. Membership has increased sevenfold during the same period, and the British Saints can look forward to a second temple in the coming years.

Sixth, the Church in the British Isles has come out of obscurity during this second century in a remarkable way. The meetinghouse construction program, initiated in the early sixties, has made the Church more visible. Over two hundred beautiful new chapels now dot the country. Furthermore, the appointment of a full-time director of public communications in 1978 has intensified these efforts which will continue to gather momentum.

Seventh, the setting up of the temporal offices, commencing with construction and distribution, and the opening of an area office in Solihull, are a significant part of establishing the Church in Great Britain. All of the necessary supplies and services are now within two or three hundred miles instead of six thousand miles away.

Eighth, the calling of Regional Representatives in the British Isles, increasing by stages from one to three, and then to five, was an important factor in the development of stakes and training of stake leaders. I pay tribute to all those who have served on the area council and regional councils since their inception in 1979. The appointment of resident General Authorities has also been a great strengthening influence.

Ninth, the British Saints can be justly proud that they hosted the first area conference of the Church in 1971, with twelve thousand attending the general sessions and two thousand the general priesthood session. The great success of this conference led to similar conferences throughout the world. President Joseph Fielding Smith's statement at that time that the Church was "coming of age" was a landmark in the growth of the Church in Britain.

With the subsequent dramatic increase in worldwide membership and in the number of stakes, with the additional travel load involved, it was decided to hold regional, rather than area, conferences from 1984 on. Again, Britain was in the forefront, and many of the brethren attended a



series of regional conferences throughout the country during the first year of this innovation and will do so again in 1987. The group training of priesthood leaders by members of the Council of the Twelve during the past year has also had a very positive impact.

Tenth, the future of the Church in the British Isles is very bright as missionaries and members work together to baptize men who will hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and lead their families to the temple. Aaronic Priesthood quorums will prepare their young men for missions and temple marriage, and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums reach out to the less active to prepare them for ordination and for temple blessings with their families. The Church and its members in the British Isles will then become a power and influence for good throughout the nation.

This 150th anniversary year of 1987 provides the opportunity not only to review past achievements but also to move forward in a major way to bless the land and its peoples with the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, preparing for his glorious Second Coming and the millennial reign.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*History of the Church* 2:490.

<sup>2</sup>Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain: A Brief Summary of the Activities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the United Kingdom, with Emphasis on Its Introduction One Hundred Years Ago* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1937), 238.

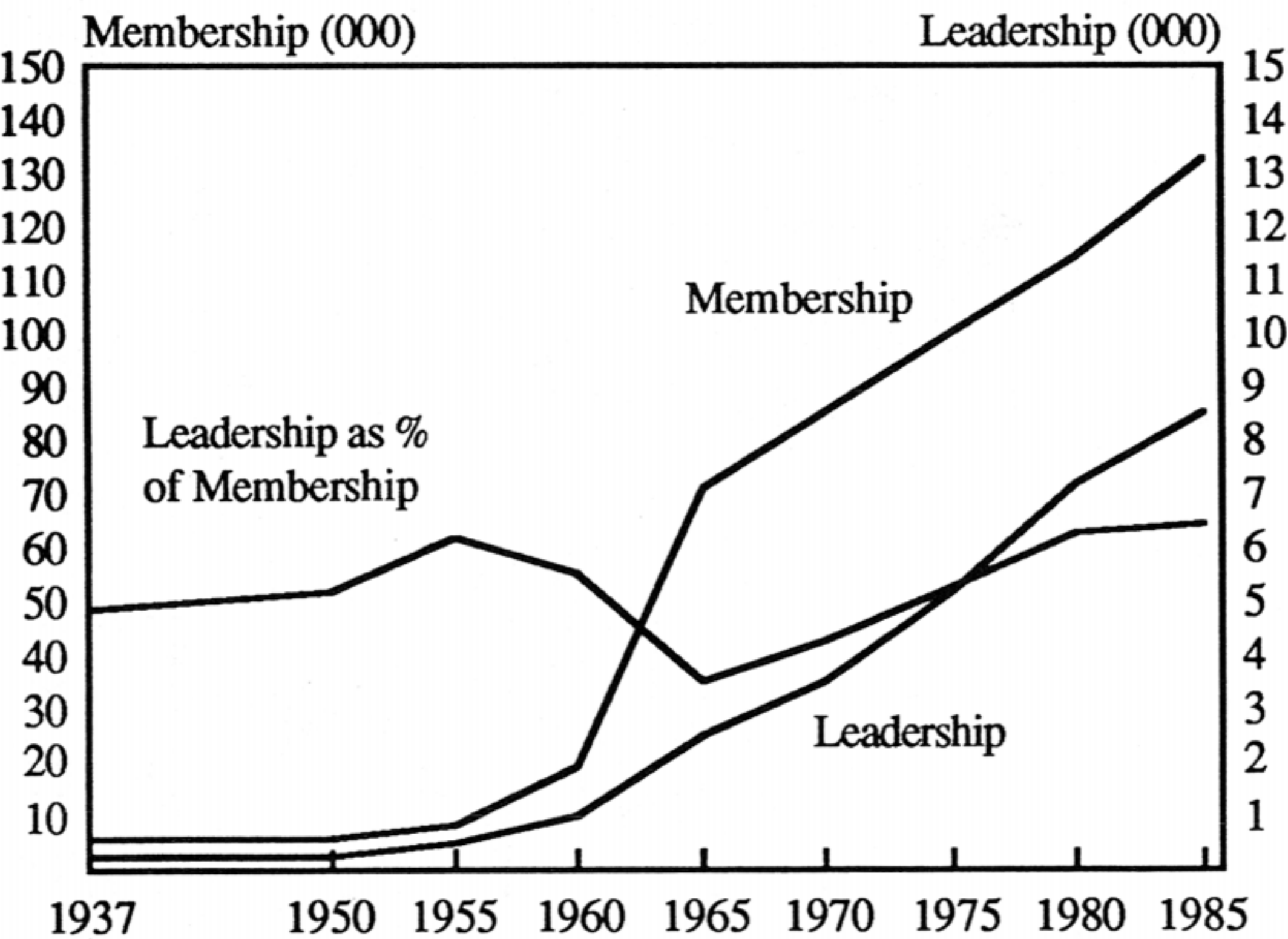
<sup>3</sup>Orson F. Whitney, *The Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945), 188.



APPENDIX 1

Membership and Leadership Growth in the British Isles, 1937-86

| Year | Membership |              | Melchizedek Priesthood |              |              |
|------|------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|
|      | Number     | No. per Unit | Number                 | No. per Unit | % of Members |
| 1937 | 6,364      | 95           | 310                    | 4            | 4.9          |
| 1950 | 6,457      | 84           | 336                    | 4            | 5.2          |
| 1955 | 9,209      | 114          | 565                    | 7            | 6.1          |
| 1960 | 19,332     | 193          | 1,073                  | 10           | 5.5          |
| 1965 | 71,005     | 257          | 2,500                  | 9            | 3.5          |
| 1970 | 85,217     | 309          | 3,579                  | 13           | 4.2          |
| 1975 | 99,830     | 359          | 5,160                  | 18           | 5.2          |
| 1980 | 114,558    | 334          | 7,162                  | 21           | 6.2          |
| 1985 | 132,810    | 368          | 8,658                  | 24           | 6.5          |



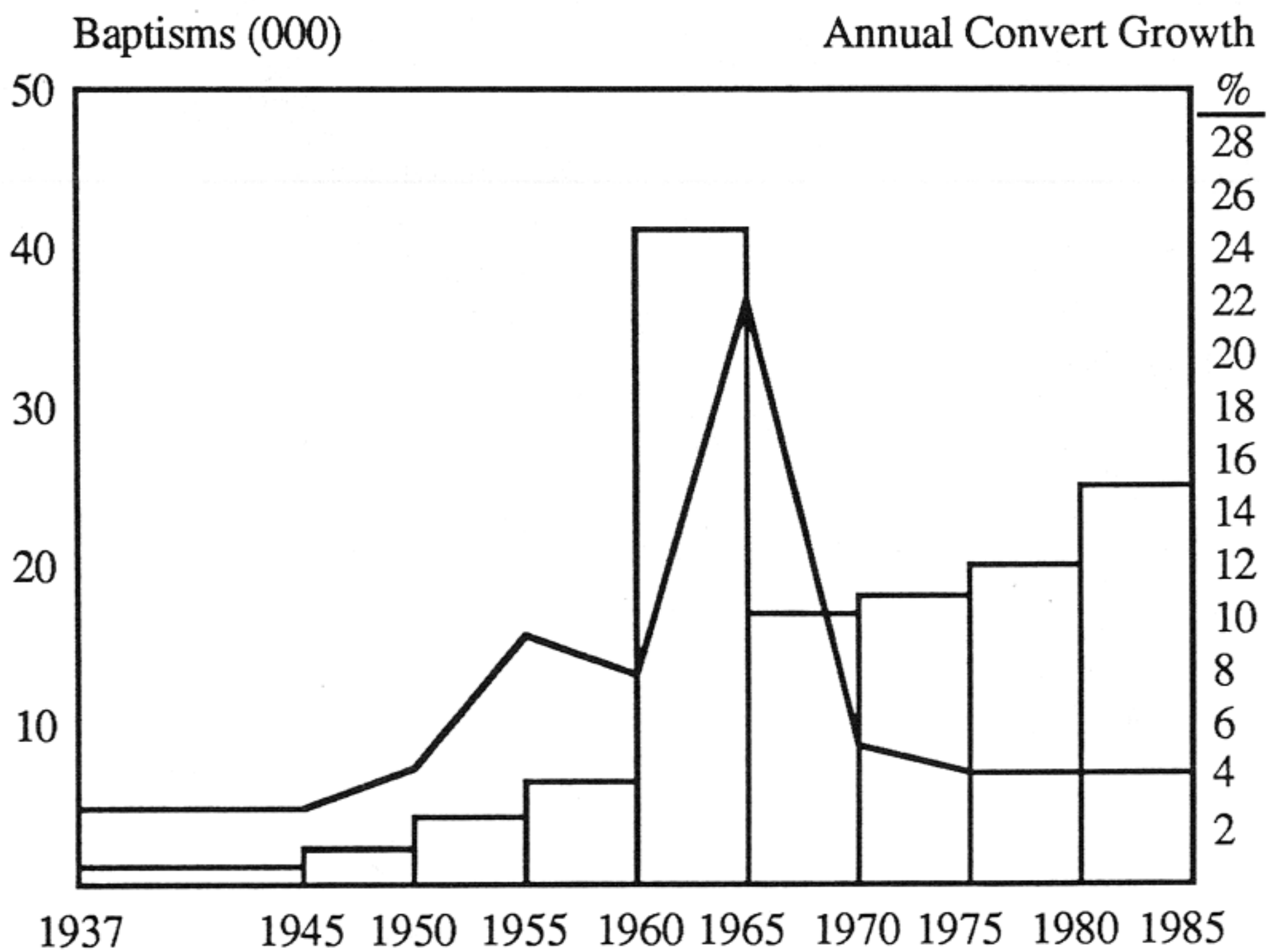
Note: The right-hand scale is also leadership % of membership

Source: Church membership and statistical records



# APPENDIX 2 Convert Baptisms in the British Isles, 1937-85

| Period  | Convert Baptisms | Annual Convert % Growth |
|---------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1937-44 | 474              | 2                       |
| 1945-49 | 816              | 3                       |
| 1950-54 | 2,864            | 9                       |
| 1955-59 | 3,875            | 8                       |
| 1960-64 | 40,573           | 22                      |
| 1965-69 | 17,065           | 5                       |
| 1970-74 | 18,288           | 4                       |
| 1975-79 | 19,942           | 4                       |
| 1980-84 | 25,132           | 4                       |
| 1985    | 3,706            | 3                       |
| 1937-85 | 132,735          |                         |



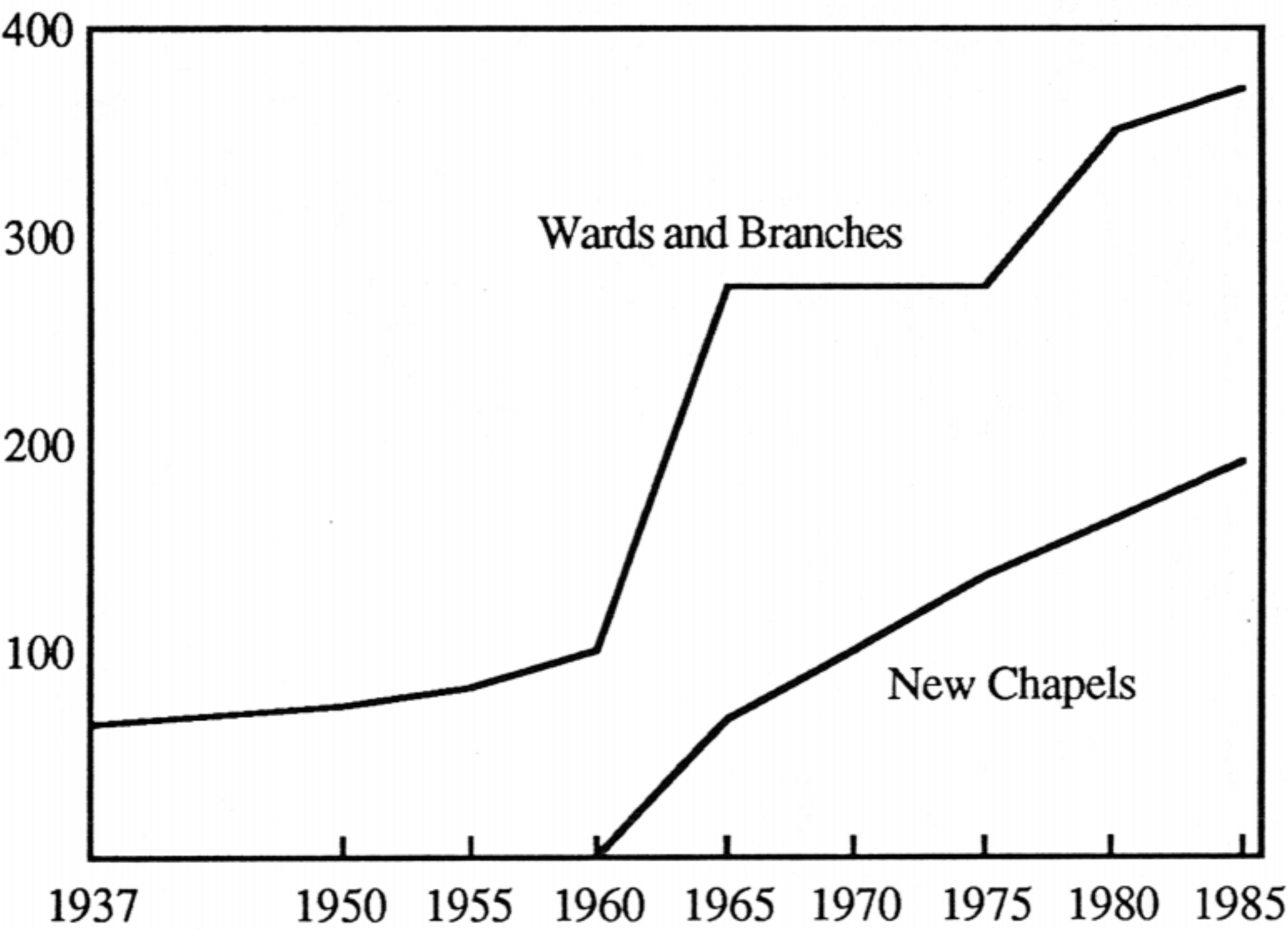
*Source:* Church statistical records



APPENDIX 3

Growth in Number of Church Units  
and New Meetinghouses, 1937-85

| Year | Mission Branches | Wards and Branches in Stakes | Total Units | New Chapels |
|------|------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1937 | 67               | —                            | 67          | —           |
| 1950 | 77               | —                            | 77          | —           |
| 1955 | 81               | —                            | 81          | —           |
| 1960 | 89               | 11                           | 100         | —           |
| 1965 | 217              | 59                           | 276         | 54          |
| 1970 | 188              | 88                           | 276         | 98          |
| 1975 | 81               | 197                          | 278         | 134         |
| 1980 | 20               | 323                          | 343         | 162         |
| 1985 | 8                | 353                          | 361         | 195         |



Source: Church membership and statistical records

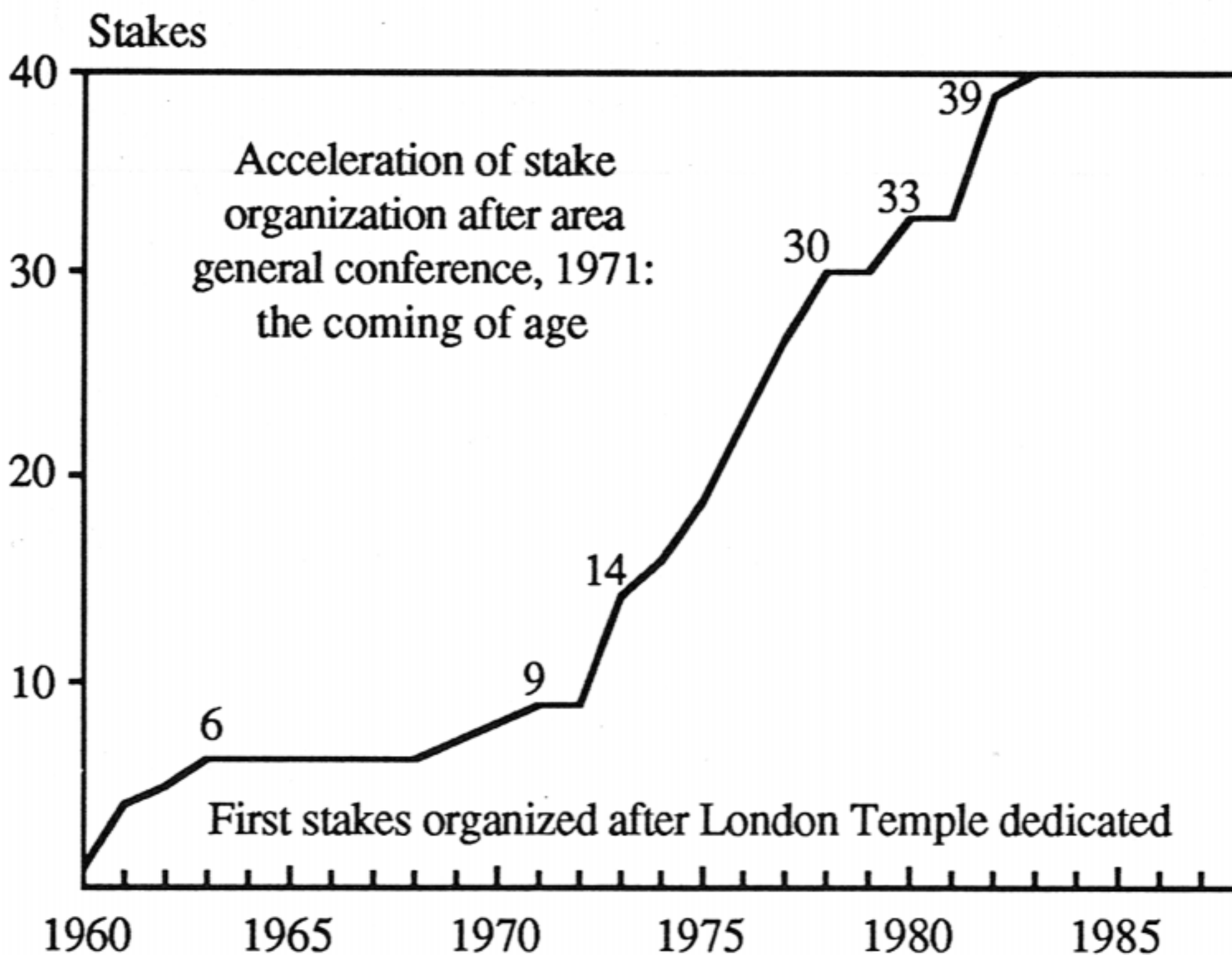


# APPENDIX 4

## Organization of British Stakes, 1960-86

| Date  |            | Date                   |            |
|---|------------|------------------------|------------|
| 1. Manchester                                       | 27 Mar. 60 | 21. Hartlepool         | 13 Jun. 76 |
| 2. London (realigned and renamed London Wandsworth) | 26 Feb. 61 | (renamed Billingham)   |            |
| 3. Leicester  | 5 Mar. 61  | 22. Preston            | 17 Jun. 76 |
| 4. Leeds (renamed Huddersfield)                     | 19 Mar. 61 | 23. Leeds              | 12 Nov. 76 |
| 5. Glasgow Scotland                                 | 26 Aug. 62 | 24. Northampton        | 13 Feb. 77 |
| 6. Sunderland                                       | 17 Mar. 63 | 25. Lichfield          | 20 Feb. 77 |
| 7. Birmingham                                       | 14 Sep. 69 | 26. Crawley            | 14 Aug. 77 |
| 8. London North (realigned and renamed St. Albans)  | 20 Sep. 70 | 27. Plymouth           | 27 Nov. 77 |
| 9. East Anglia (renamed Norwich)                    | 20 Jun. 71 | 28. Maidstone          | 28 May 78  |
| 10. Nottingham                                      | 4 Feb. 73  | 29. Staines            | 28 May 78  |
| 11. Southampton                                     | 11 Feb. 73 | 30. London Hyde Park   | 28 May 78  |
| 12. Hull  | 26 Apr. 73 | 31. Aberdeen Scotland  | 12 Oct. 80 |
| 13. Bristol   | 29 Apr. 73 | 32. Edinburgh Scotland | 12 Oct. 80 |
| 14. Thames Valley (renamed Reading)                 | 24 May 73  | 33. Paisley Scotland   | 12 Oct. 80 |
| 15. Belfast Ireland                                 | 9 Jun. 74  | 34. Cheltenham         | 21 Mar. 82 |
| 16. Romford   | 24 Nov. 74 | 35. Cardiff Wales      | 9 May 82   |
| 17. Merthyr Tydfil Wales                            | 12 Jan. 75 | 36. Poole              | 23 May 82  |
| 18. Newcastle-under-Lyme                            | 17 Jan. 75 | 37. Chester            | 6 Jun. 82  |
| 19. Dundee Scotland                                 | 23 Nov. 75 | 38. Ashton             | 6 Jun. 82  |
| 20. Liverpool                                       | 14 Mar. 76 | 39. Sheffield          | 14 Nov. 82 |
|   |            | 40. Ipswich            | 29 May 83  |

Source: Church Historical Department



Source: New Era



# The Ebb and Flow of Mormonism in Scotland, 1840–1900

Frederick S. Buchanan

The story of Mormonism in Scotland actually begins in Canada—not surprisingly when one realizes that for thousands of expatriate Scots in the nineteenth century, Canada was a second homeland. Two Scotsmen, Alexander Wright of Banffshire and Samuel Mulliner of Midlothian, had settled in Upper Canada (now known as Ontario) in the mid-1830s, and shortly thereafter they were converted to the Mormon church. They soon let their relatives know about the new religion by sending to Scotland copies of Parley P. Pratt's *A Voice of Warning*, and in 1839 they were called to return to their homeland as emissaries of the new American faith. After four months of proselyting, by May of 1840, they had baptized some eighty Scots into the Church, and shortly thereafter the first Latter-day Saint branch was organized at Paisley by Apostle Orson Pratt.<sup>1</sup> By the end of the century some ten thousand people had joined the Church in Scotland, and almost half of the converts had left Scotland as part of the Mormon gathering to Zion.

The events of history do not occur in a vacuum, however. In human history as in nature itself, as John Muir so aptly phrased it, “when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in order to fully understand the development of Mormonism in Scotland, it is necessary to put that experience in the perspective of the times by briefly sketching the Scottish conditions to which Mormonism in the nineteenth century was “hitched.” To do this the nostalgic view of Scotland (encouraged by the Scots themselves as much as anyone) as a land of tartan-clad clansmen or of romantic peasants crooning the “auld Scotch sangs” of Robert Burns or Lady Nairn must give way to a less ideal view of a land in turmoil over the changes which were being forced upon it by the new industrial order. These dramatic changes made the Scots “the shock troops of modernization” because Scotland was one of the first nations to undergo the political, economic, and social trauma associated with rapid industrial development.<sup>3</sup>

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Frederick S. Buchanan is an associate professor of educational studies at the University of Utah. The writer benefited greatly from the insight of three friends, Nicholas Burbules, Brigham Madsen, and Monty McLaws, in the process of writing this paper; however, they bear no responsibility for the interpretations made.



Nathaniel Hawthorne gives a vivid sense of Scottish city life when he describes the Canongate of Edinburgh—Walter Scott’s “mine own romantic town”—during an 1857 visit to “auld reekie.” Hawthorne gazed “down the horrible vistas of the Closes, which were swarming with dirty human life as some mould and half-decayed substance might swarm with insects;—vistas down alleys where sin, sorrow, poverty, drunkenness, all manner of somber and sordid earthly circumstances, had imbued the stone, brick, and wood of the habitations, for hundreds of years.” Night, he said, hides the reality of these Edinburgh slums—“the home of layer upon layer of unfortunate humanity”—and the change from day to night symbolized for Hawthorne the difference between “a poet’s imagination of life in the past . . . and the sad reality.”<sup>4</sup> What, then, were some of the “sad realities” which helped to shape the Scottish nation and prepared it to become a fertile seedbed for the message of the Mormon elders?

The emergence of large urban areas changed considerably the geography of Scotland as the need for more coal mines and factories crowded in on the once rural counties of Midlothian, Lanark, Renfrew, and Ayr. In place of villages where close-knit family life dominated the pace of living, former rural villages like Airdrie, Coatbridge, and Wishaw became “frontier towns”—seething conglomerations of squalor and poverty whose police forces were kept busy trying to maintain a semblance of law and order. Overcrowded conditions and frequent unemployment generated yet another set of problems—diseases such as cholera, high rates of infant mortality, and an alarming degree of drunkenness and crime.<sup>5</sup>

Although Thomas Chalmers, one of the leaders of the established Presbyterian church, had said that the greatest challenge to the church was the thousands of unchurched “heathens” growing up in the slums of the “frontier towns,” the kirk was unable or unwilling to use its influence to mitigate the evils of the industrial age.<sup>6</sup> Its impotency in face of the dramatic changes that were occurring in the land may have been caused by its own conservatism and by “the insane divisions of the Scotch church”—the traumatic disruption of the 1840s when a dispute over the role of the government in church affairs led to over four hundred ministers leaving the established church. Presbyterianism was thus split into “a three cornered affair”: the official Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, and the United Presbyterian Church—a weak basis on which to meet the new theological, cultural, industrial, and scientific challenges appearing on every hand.<sup>7</sup>

A variety of organizations arose in this period to try to counter the social and economic ills of the new age: temperance societies, cooperative unions, and more politically oriented organizations such as the Chartists, all of which attracted the attention of large numbers of



working-class people. In the late 1820s and early 1830s the attention of Scotland's dispossessed was also attracted to the charismatic preaching of a young minister from Dumfries, the Reverend Edward Irving. His emphasis on the need for a return to primitive Christianity and upon the gifts of the Spirit drew large crowds in the west of Scotland, in Edinburgh, and later in London. In April of 1830, when Joseph Smith was establishing the LDS church in upper New York, a great religious awakening involving spiritual manifestations also swept through the west of Scotland and later spread to other parts of Britain. At this time it was reported that "among quite ordinary folk wonderful things had occurred; there were reports of miraculous healings, of human faith being answered by Divine action, of speech in unknown tongues, of ecstatic utterances in prayer, and of exposition of scripture, all in a power that was preternatural."<sup>8</sup>

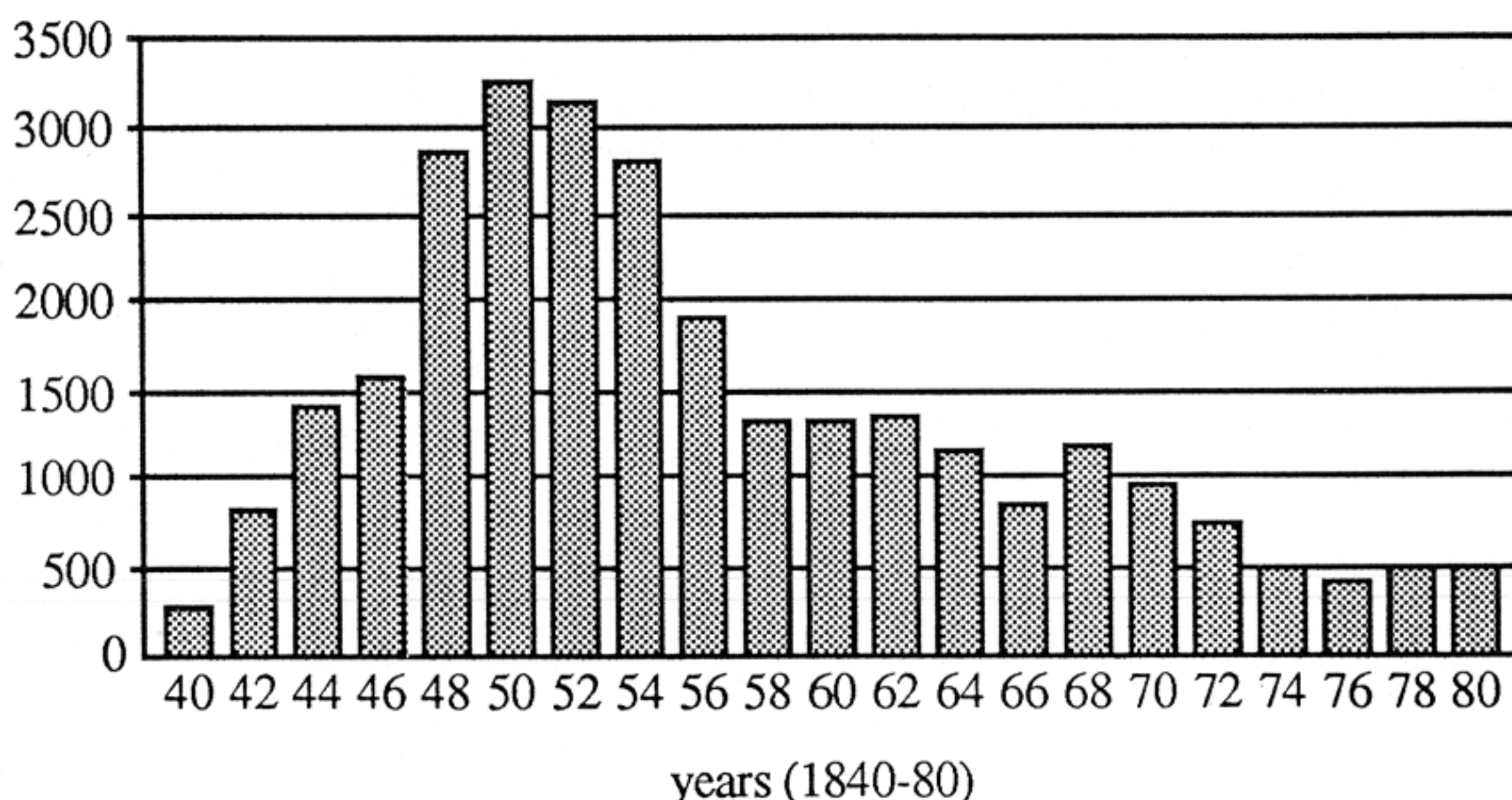
This religious awakening has been interpreted as a reaction to the formalism and gloomy tendency of the old Calvinism which seemed to restrict the love of God and Christ's atonement to a few elect individuals. Clergy of the national Church of Scotland such as the Reverend MacLeod Campbell of the Rhu Kirk in Helensburgh began to preach a more humane theology and of a God who was willing that all should be saved. Unfortunately for Irving and for Campbell, these religious innovations also attracted the attention of their superiors in the Church of Scotland and both men were expelled from the Presbyterian ministry in the early 1830s. However, the revival of which they were a part sparked the development in Great Britain of the Catholic Apostolic Church. This group, with Edward Irving as one of its leaders, claimed that Christianity had apostatized from the principles and practices of the primitive church. The sure sign of this apostate condition was that Christendom denied the need for the gifts of the Spirit such as tongues, healings, and prophecy. These gifts, it was claimed, had now been restored as part of the "signs of the times" which would culminate in the imminent Second Advent of Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup>

When the Mormon missionaries came to Scotland in 1839, they were working a field which was "ready" for a message which promised that God had spoken through "quite ordinary folk" and had restored the authority, practices, and power of the primitive church. Nor was Joseph Smith unaware of what was happening in Scotland; in February 1836 he had a visit from two Scotsmen who made "inquiry about the work of the Lord in these last days" and who discussed with him the religious ideas of Edward Irving.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Joseph recognized the similarity between the "Irvingites" and his own claims about the need for a restoration: in 1842 he said that though they "counterfeited the truth," the Irvingites were "perhaps the nearest of any of the modern sectarians."<sup>11</sup> Unwittingly, they may have helped prepare the groundwork for the Mormon success.



During its first decade in Scotland the Mormon church grew from twenty-one members and no organized branches in April of 1840 to 3,291 members located in fifty-seven branches in 1851. The steady growth from 1840 to 1851 can be seen in the following table.<sup>12</sup>

TABLE 1  
Scottish Membership



In this period of continuous growth some seventy branches of the Church were organized in Scotland; twenty-eight of them in the foremost industrialized counties—Lanark, Renfrew, and Ayr—which at one time had been the seat of Scotland's weaving industry and now were fast becoming the center of the coal-mining industry. Most of the other branches were situated in the vicinity of Stirling, Fife, Clackmannan, and Edinburgh: all in the Scottish Lowlands and also heavily involved in coal mining and all, of course, the abode of Scotland's working class.

The attraction which Mormonism held out to the workers in the industrial areas of England has sometimes been explained by making conversion *nothing but* a "reflex of despair."<sup>13</sup> No doubt a similar explanation could be offered for the initial success in Scotland's industrial counties. Certainly a sense of deprivation may have been a necessary condition for conversion of some people, but it is not a sufficient condition. As will be discussed later, conversion was a very personal thing and cannot be fully explained by any one set of circumstances. Rather than being either/or, it appears to have been a combination of both spiritual and material, not to mention psychological, needs that were perhaps satisfied by the Mormon promise.

As one reads William Gibson's extensive journal, for example, the religious and spiritual commitment is obvious. He was converted to



Mormon truth claims, of that there can be no doubt. But Gibson, a former Chartist, is just as fervent in acknowledging that he was leaving Scotland in large measure because of the grinding poverty he faced and that he wanted a piece of the soil that he could call his own "and own no master but our God." To those fellow miners who criticized his choice he posed a challenging question: "Does your Parson speak against oppression of your masters & in favour of the Poor? No, they dare not for fear of losing their place & their salary, but they tell you from the Pulpit to be content with your lot."<sup>14</sup> While it may not explain every aspect of Gibson's conversion and decision to leave Scotland, perhaps his reformist bias is one factor in shaping his view of Mormonism as a means of escaping adverse economic conditions. For Gibson it was apparently God's will that he do so.

In contrast to the large number of Lowlanders who joined the Church, relatively few Highlanders were attracted to the Mormon message. Charles Dickens, in a rhetorical flourish in his *Uncommercial Traveller*, has a "Mormon Agent" in 1863 say that no Highlanders joined the Mormons because they lacked interest in "universal brotherhood, and peace and good will," had "too much of the old fighting blood" in them and lacked faith "in anything."<sup>15</sup> Dickens might have a point—the more traditional and parochial a society is, the less it is likely to be amenable to change. The Highlanders were agrarian people and were staunchly committed to their conservative (and after the disruption of 1842 "Wee Free") Presbyterianism. There was also the language barrier of Gaelic, although Peter McIntyre traversed Argyllshire and some of the western islands preaching to large groups in Gaelic around 1845. Though many listened and even agreed with the message, none accepted baptism.<sup>16</sup> When William MacKay offered to preach Mormonism "in the Gaelic language to our Scottish Highlanders" in 1847, William Gibson expressed the hope that success would attend MacKay's efforts "till the heather hills of old Scotland reverberate with the songs of Zion." In 1850 a Gaelic tract was even printed in Inverness under the title "Do Suchd-siridh Kioghachd Dhe" (Seekers after the Kingdom of God).<sup>17</sup>

While a few "hardy sons [and daughters] of the mountains" accepted the Mormon message, it was not the heather hills of the Highlands, but rather the smokestacks and crowded, dank alleys of industrial Scotland which echoed with the songs of Zion sung by growing Mormon congregations. With the rapid increase in membership in Scotland's industrial heartland, new Church units were formed so that between 1855 and 1859 there were actually four Latter-day Saint conferences in Scotland—Glasgow, Kilmarnock, Edinburgh, and Dundee. As might be expected, given its population of 345,000 in 1851, Glasgow led the other conferences throughout this period (and throughout the nineteenth century) in numbers of branches and



membership, sometimes accounting for twice as many Mormons as all other areas combined.<sup>18</sup> For example, in 1855 Glasgow had 20 branches and 1,442 members; Edinburgh, 14 branches and 666 members; Dundee, 8 branches and 242 members; and Kilmarnock, 7 branches and 271 members.

With such rapid and sustained growth it is no wonder that the *Millennial Star* proclaimed in 1848: "Scotland is doing wonders; upwards of 400 baptized during the last quarter. . . . We hope to see thousands of her enterprising noble sons come forward as valiant men in this great and triumphant work of this last dispensation. . . . Let Scotland then hear, and she shall prevail."<sup>19</sup>

References to Mormons in local Scottish histories are few, but one history dealing with Tranent published in 1883 referred to the Latter-day Saint congregation as "flourishing to an extraordinary degree" in the 1860s and stated that the Mormons were large enough to support a brass band. Within a few years, however, changes had occurred, and the short "history" of the Mormons in Tranent concluded: "the body is entirely defunct, all having renounced the doctrines of the Prophet, or flown to the land of promise."<sup>20</sup>

This terse statement is an accurate assessment of the decline which followed the dramatic increase of the 1840s and 1850s, not only in Tranent, but throughout Scotland. Between 1855 and 1859, for instance, there was approximately a 50 percent or more decline in membership in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee conferences. In the same period, Kilmarnock went from a membership of 271 to 52—an 80 percent decline. Three basic reasons, internal to the Mormon church, may be considered as contributing to the ebbing fortunes of Mormon congregations in Scotland during the latter half of the nineteenth century: first, the continual drop in conversions after the 1850s; second, the siphoning off of the cream of the crop through emigration to Utah through the 1880s; and third, the practice of excommunicating large numbers of members for real or perceived violations of Church discipline in the 1850s and 1860s.

## I

The most obvious factor contributing to the long-term decline was simply that, compared to the early years, fewer people were being attracted to the message of the Restoration. A glance at the statistics on baptisms clearly underscores this reality: during the sixty-year period beginning in 1840 and running through 1899 approximately some 10,785 persons were baptized into the Latter-day Saint faith in Scotland. Of the total who joined the Church during this period, 30 percent did so during the first decade; 32 percent



joined in the second decade; and 17 percent were baptized in the 1860s. These may be considered the most fruitful years for Mormon conversions and certainly justify the proclamation in the *Millennial Star* that "Scotland is doing wonders." By stark contrast, only 7 percent of the total conversions can be credited to the 1870s; with 8 percent in the 1880s and a minuscule 5 percent of baptisms occurring in the last decade of the century. When it is recognized that baptisms declined from as high as 559 in only one conference, Edinburgh, in 1848, to as low as 35 in *all* of Scotland in 1873, it is appropriate to characterize the last thirty years of Mormonism in Scotland as "gie dreich" (very bleak).

Another index of the decline is the shrinkage in the numbers of organized Mormon congregations. It has been calculated that a total of some seventy branches of the LDS church were organized in Scotland during the nineteenth century beginning with five organized in 1840. The maximum number existing at any one time was about fifty, coinciding with the peak of membership (3,291) in 1851. By 1860 the number of branches had declined to thirty and by 1880 to fourteen. By 1899 the numbers had almost gone back to the number for 1840—six congregations.

That the decline was recognized as a reality is evident when the Kilmarnock Conference merged with Glasgow in 1858 and Dundee merged with Edinburgh in 1868. In 1869 the membership in the vicinity of the proud capital city had shrunk so low as to require its reorganization as a branch of the Glasgow Conference. On the thirty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Glasgow Conference in 1875, a report indicated that in all of Scotland there were but ten branches of the Mormon church with a total membership of 482—a number which had not been seen on the Scottish records since 1841.

While there was considerable elation in the *Millennial Star* over the fact that there were thousands in the 1840s and 1850s who found meaning in the message of the missionaries, one gets the impression from later missionary accounts that proselyting work in the later years was essentially one of trying to keep complete dissolution of the Church at bay. Hamilton G. Park, Brigham Young's business manager, reporting on his missionary labors in Scotland in 1869 acknowledged that "the people in this country Seems cold and indifferent as regards the Gospel and but very few manifest any desire to enquire after us as a people or come and hear for themselves."<sup>21</sup> David McKenzie reported his missionary labors in Scotland in 1874 as "hopeful," but in spite of an aggressive newspaper advertising campaign "we baptize only a few." Writing to Brigham Young a year later, McKenzie still had some hope but admitted that



it is not satisfactory to behold the indifference and the darkness of the people as to their salvation. Our holy religion is very unpopular, honest men seem afraid to join us. In many respects it is very different now from formerly. There are few local elders left in the mission who can represent us fairly. Again the priests and editors have never ceased to lie about and malign us and have established a deep seated prejudice against us—the work of over 35 years of constant labor—while it is unquestionably true the elders have not been able to keep pace with them in rebutting their misrepresentations.<sup>22</sup>

In the mid-1880s reports from Edinburgh still sounded some hope but admitted that “few feel interested enough to come to meeting” and comparatively few were being baptized.<sup>23</sup> And from Glasgow, George F. Hunter complained “of a spirit of indifference in this land and in all the Districts where the Elders are laboring. There is little being done in the way of making converts.”<sup>24</sup> Elder John Crawford reported in 1883 that the Scottish Saints were “few and far between, scattered all over the country, and most of them very poor. There is only one Conference in Scotland where there used to be four.”<sup>25</sup> And in 1890, after fifty years of Mormonism in Scotland, there were only a little over two hundred Latter-day Saints in what at one time had been one of the most fruitful fields of the British vineyard.<sup>26</sup>

Given the indifference and lack of growth it is easy to understand why some might interpret the situation as proof that all the “believing blood” of Israel had been gathered out of Scotland and that all that remained were a few gleanings to be gathered up before the final wrapping-up scenes of the Second Coming. Hamilton G. Park may have had this in mind when he told Brigham Young that the few baptisms taking place in Scotland were “one of a city and two of a Family.”<sup>27</sup> When an unusually large crowd attended a Mormon meeting in Edinburgh’s Seaton Hall in 1880, the missionaries interpreted it to mean that the time for uprooting the “apostolic foundation laid many years ago in this British ‘Modern Athens’ ” had not yet arrived, but the implication was there that it soon would be.<sup>28</sup> In spite of intense proselyting (there was an average of fourteen full-time missionaries in Scotland during the 1890s—with a peak of twenty-four in 1897), yet there was still a decided dearth of results as far as baptisms were concerned.

Other more pragmatic reasons for the decline included missionaries not applying themselves to their labors with enough diligence, the lack of worthy role models among the local priesthood, and the use of whiskey and tobacco by the Church members.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the precise reasons were for the decline, there can be no doubt that in contrast to the heyday of conversions in the earlier years, the task of converting the Scots to Mormonism in the latter part of the nineteenth century was a “slow business,”<sup>30</sup> and the results, in terms of numbers at least, must be



judged minimal. The Mormon church in Scotland did survive, of course, but barely.

Paralleling the decline in conversions and contributing to the overall reduction of the Mormon congregations in Scotland was a continual siphoning off of the faithful to Zion. Next to obeying the command to be baptized, the doctrine of the gathering loomed large as a test of one’s faithfulness. Because of this, between 1850 and 1859 over eighteen hundred Scottish Saints emigrated and in the next decade approximately sixteen hundred left Scotland. Although the numbers leaving in the decade 1870–79 were only about 60 percent of the numbers leaving in the earlier decade, yet they still constituted a significant proportion of the growth in the Church during the years when the baptismal rate was dropping. The following table vividly reveals the extent to which emigration contributed to the overall decline.<sup>31</sup>

TABLE 2

| Years   | Baptisms | Emigration | Emigration<br>as % of Baptisms |
|---------|----------|------------|--------------------------------|
| 1850–59 | 3,477    | 1,871      | 54%                            |
| 1860–69 | 1,864    | 1,559      | 83%                            |
| 1870–79 | 767      | 956        | 125%                           |
| 1880–89 | 874      | 772        | 88%                            |
| 1890–99 | 546      | 171        | 31%                            |
| 1850–99 | 7,528    | 5,329      | 71%                            |

Reduced to its barest terms the point of becoming a member of the Church was to save oneself before the Judgment Day and to prepare for the imminent Second Coming. And the doctrine of the gathering was seen as an essential aspect of that preparation. The twentieth-century idea of staying in Scotland and creating a Zion society there was simply not part of the Mormon strategy. Not until 1899 were Scots told that God would look after them in Scotland as well as in Utah.<sup>32</sup> By contrast, in the 1850s and 1860s there appears to have been a distinct notion that *not* to emigrate was going against the counsel of the brethren, and perhaps even of God. As Henry Hamilton recorded in his assessment of a new convert in 1855: “I could see he had some faith in the principles of the Gospel, he desired to go to America.”<sup>33</sup>

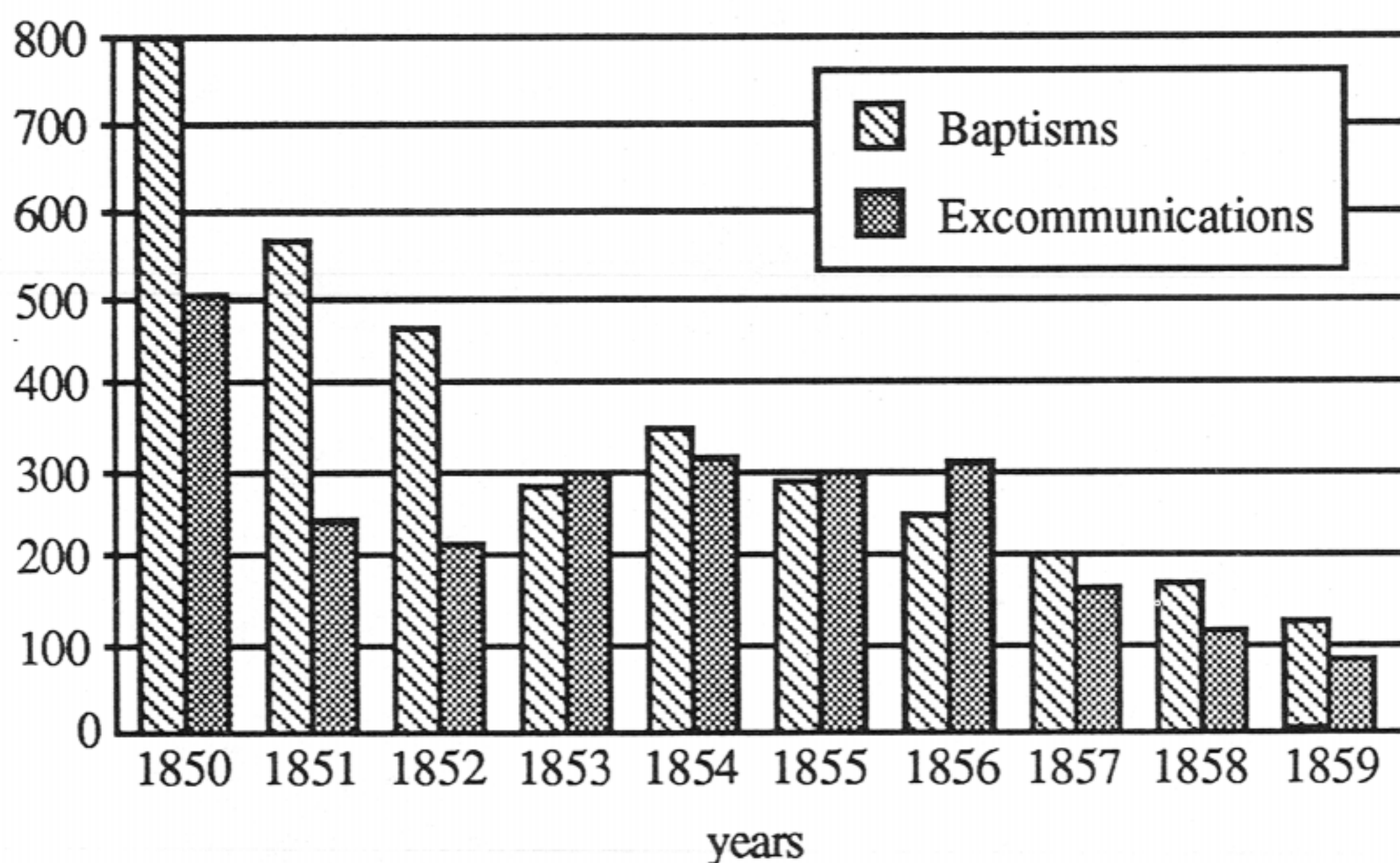
Utah’s gain was Scotland’s loss. It was difficult to sustain a viable Mormon community in Scotland in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The enthusiastic Scottish response to the gathering forestalled that possibility. Almost 50 percent of the total new growth (through baptisms) in the nineteenth century was siphoned off through emigration. Given the emphasis among the Mormons of lay leadership,



the surprising thing is perhaps not that the Church didn't grow, but that it even survived.

When the loss in total membership through reduced conversions and emigration is considered alongside the loss through excommunication (especially in the early years), the survival of the Mormon church in Scotland is even more surprising. For example, in the decade 1850 to 1859 during which 3,477 people were baptized, a total of 2,269 excommunications are recorded, leaving a net gain for the decade of 1,208.

TABLE 3  
Baptisms and Excommunications, 1850-59



Although the high rate of excommunications in the 1850s (65 percent of new baptisms) was actually atypical of other decades (13 percent, 14 percent, and 5 percent respectively in the 1860s, 1880s, and 1890s), the basis for natural growth was negated during the 1850s by the excommunication of so many members. From a purely numerical perspective there was no foundation upon which to build the Mormon community in Scotland. When combined with over eighteen hundred who emigrated during the 1850s and over fifteen hundred in the 1860s, the effects of this aggressive excommunication policy can be interpreted as no less than devastating. Nevertheless, the rationale appears to have been that if only a few could enter the strait and narrow way, then the Church would have to be purged of those who did not meet the exacting standards.<sup>34</sup>

It must be acknowledged, however, that not all excommunications may have been justified. Authoritarianism and personal pique too



often were involved in the disciplining of members.<sup>35</sup> In some cases it may have represented a too strenuous striving for unquestioned obedience on the part of local leaders. According to David M. Stuart, the leaders of the Edinburgh Conference in 1860 were too apt to resort to excommunication when some opposed their plans. The leadership even questioned the authority of the mission representatives. Stuart suggested that the conflict arose because “we preach Salvation and they want donation” for the support of the Conference leadership.<sup>36</sup>

The minutes of the Edinburgh Conference in 1851 express concern over the large number of people being excommunicated and regard it as evidence that new converts were joining the Church *before* they had a clear conception of what it meant to follow the “laws of God.”<sup>37</sup> The Mormon conception of being saved was more than simply *saying* one believed in Jesus, in Joseph Smith’s revelations, or in the principles of the gospel. There was a clear expectation that one should *act* in certain ways. Termination of Church membership could be justified by a person being found guilty of “keeping company with the world,” “treating the servants of God with contempt,” “drunkenness,” “neglect of duty,” “apostacy and sacriligious conduct.” Daniel Brown was called before the Dundee council because he had opened his shop on the Sabbath, while another brother was accused of “not comming to his duty, he had objections in regard to plurality of wives.” In 1852 a “Priest Adamson” was charged with “rebellion” when he argued with the presiding officer in the Falkirk council meeting. He was “cut off,” but a fellow backslider, John Frew, was forgiven when he came before the council and confessed his failure to attend meetings. He didn’t like being deprived of his *Millennial Star* and addressing the council he said: “i ask your forgiveness and desire an interest in your faith and prayers for i am determined to go on and be saved.”<sup>38</sup>

Sometimes the presiding authorities disfellowshipped entire branches in order to discipline the Saints. The Girvan Branch in Ayrshire was charged with “filth, drunkenness, quarreling, backbiting” at the Glasgow conference in 1849. In the same year, most of the members of the Dalry Branch (also in Ayrshire) were disfellowshipped because they had been led astray by one of their leading elders who had been mixing his Mormonism with the “fire-and-faggot principles of Chartism”—the reform movement which in Scotland actually took on a religious aura.<sup>39</sup> While the high rate of excommunication in general reflects the seriousness with which the duty of a Latter-day Saint was viewed, it might also be interpreted as a measure of the leadership’s lack of tolerance for human frailty. Nor can the possibility be ignored that those who challenged the strict interpretation of the gospel laws did so because they felt their individual free agency threatened by the demands made on them.



Eventually a more tolerant attitude seems to have developed with respect to infractions of Church discipline because in the decades following the wholesale excommunications of the 1850s there is a decided *decrease* in the excommunication rate. Efforts were also made to retrieve those who had deviated from the faith; most of the members of the Girvan and Dalry branches were rebaptized shortly after they had been cut off from the Church. Alexander Gillespie reported that much of his time as president of the Cowdenbeath Branch was spent working with Saints who had, in his opinion, been cut off prematurely. For many he succeeded in “keeping the flickering light that was in them aglow.” One gets a keen sense of the personal concern that Alexander Gillespie felt not only for the eternal welfare of these people, but for their value as human beings who deserved to be treated with respect.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the radical decrease in excommunication in the period after 1870 indicates that Alexander Gillespie was not alone among local leaders who resisted the temptation to exercise “unrighteous dominion” over their flocks.

The sense of urgency which went with being a member of the Church in those days is seen in the blessings given to two infants in the Dalry Branch in 1849, just a year after all the members of the branch had been reinstated in the Church. These children, Margaret McDonald and David Hutcheson, were blessed and promised that they would “see Jesus come in his glory and reign with him on earth.”<sup>41</sup> Henry Hamilton expressed the common hope that the “day will soon be here when the children of men will have no power over the servants of the living God, when he will overthrow the wicked and the saints will reign with the Lord God a 1,000 years on the earth and may it soon be accomplished.”<sup>42</sup> Such was the faith of many of the ten thousand Scots who joined the Church in the nineteenth century, who set their eyes “Zionward,” and who met the strict requirements of being one of the chosen people of the latter days.

## II

The Mormon missionaries were not, of course, dealing with aggregates, but with individuals, and the Scottish Mormon experience cannot be adequately appreciated without an understanding of what it was like to become a Mormon in the middle of the nineteenth century. Who were these people who allied themselves with the strange doctrines from America? Why did they join such an unpopular group? What experiences did they have that confirmed them in their position? How were they viewed by the majority?

As already noted, the bulk of the Mormon branches were situated in the industrialized counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Midlothian, and Ayr. An examination of the occupations of a segment of those Mormons who



set out for Utah during the years 1850–70 indicates that Scottish Mormons were solidly working-class. Of 588 Scottish Mormon males who are listed in the Liverpool Emigration Records for the foregoing years, 40.6 percent were identified as from the mining industry; 11.5 percent were listed as being associated with the textile industry; laborers made up 7.8 percent; metal workers, including blacksmiths, accounted for 7.1 percent; and the leather industry was represented by 5.4 percent. Three major working-class occupations then accounted for three quarters of the sample group, with the remaining 25 percent consisting of carpenters, stonemasons, gardeners, farmers, bakers, and ropemakers. Middle-class professionals were apparently not absent, however, and one can find listed among the Scottish emigrants individuals who listed their occupation as a surgeon, dentist, druggist, schoolteacher, and schoolmaster.<sup>43</sup> However, these are a minuscule number compared to those who might be classified as members of the working class.

The foregoing figures compare very favorably with Malcolm Thorp's analysis of the class background of twenty-one Scottish Mormon converts for the period 1837–52. He identified 80 percent of the Scottish converts as being working-class, 10 percent lower middle-class and 10 percent middle-class. In contrast, his sample of English converts reveals that only 56 percent were identified as members of the working class. Given the limited number of persons included in Thorp's study, care must be taken not to read too much into it; however, along with the statistical breakdown of Scottish emigrants in the Church's emigration records, it appears to be a relatively accurate reflection of a general tendency for the Mormons to make converts among the working class, especially in Scotland.<sup>44</sup>

This class basis of the Mormon converts may explain in part the success which the Mormons met in Scotland's industrial heartland. With their emphasis upon a lay ministry open to all, regardless of rank or status, the Mormons preached a relatively egalitarian type of Christianity which stood in stark contrast to the exclusionary policies of the established church with its pew rental fees and its middle-class emphasis upon proper attire for church attendance. One 1838 critic of the state church's "official errors" asserted that its leaders were "more concerned for the prosperity of Toryism (of if you will tyranny) than they are for the amelioration of the industrious poor, or the progress of genuine religion." In the course of this radical critique, mention is made of the assumption that the workers were "ignorant," "rude," and consisting of the "scum," "mob," and "rabble"—terms used in the 1840s to describe those who associated with the Mormons.<sup>45</sup>

The relative poverty of the Saints, then, may have conditioned them to identify with the Mormon message. At least that is the impression one



gets from Samuel W. Richards, president of the Scottish Conference. In 1847, at the height of Mormon success, he wrote that hundreds of members wanted to leave Scotland with him and that "all is moving extremely well in this Country and Kingdom, belonging to the work of God. . . . The hearts of this People were bound up in us as servants of God." After this expression of the faithfulness of the Scottish Mormons, Samuel Richards goes on to give his impression of their material status:

The Saints generally in this country are well but struggling through adverse scenes of Poverty. They are generally Poor, and labour very little at many times to be got. And when Plenty their wages will scarcely get them a living. This is not Characteristic of the Saints alone, it is with all the Poorer classes of People in this Country and Kingdom. My soul feels the distress which pervades this Land.<sup>46</sup>

Given these kinds of circumstances during the time of greatest conversions, the Mormon linking of spiritual salvation with a better life here and now cannot be entirely discounted as a factor in conversion. There is a strong emphasis on practicality which runs through the Scottish character, and there are enough references to the importance of temporal salvation in journals and in the *Millennial Star* to suggest that for some converts the Mormon message, in addition to saving souls, was also viewed as saving people here and now. Indeed, when the Mormons won a public debate in Kilbirnie, Ayrshire, in 1842 by a margin of five to one, their opponents charged that those who had voted for the Saints were actually Socialists. And they might well have been, given the long Ayrshire history of nurturing radical politicians and social reformers.<sup>47</sup>

One Scottish convert of some stature, William Budge, was interested in the social reforms of the day, and his uncle, David Budge, was a member of Robert Owens's New Lanark community as well as being editor of a socialist newspaper in Lanarkshire.<sup>48</sup> During another debate on the merits of Mormonism, the leader of Glasgow's Socialists publicly defended the Latter-day Saint point of view, saying that what he had heard about Mormonism "was a decided improvement on Christianity" and expressing the hope that it would be universally accepted and practiced.<sup>49</sup>

While explaining the conversion process as nothing but a "reflex of despair" grossly oversimplifies the process of conversion, it still must be recognized that Mormonism had within it elements of egalitarianism and social justice which coincided with the rise in Scotland of social democratic trends. The Mormon missionaries spoke, in the words of John Greenleaf Whittier, "to a common feeling; they minister to a universal want."<sup>50</sup> In a land permeated by the social democratic cult of Robert Burns, the popular notion "that a man's a man for a' that," if it does not completely explain the Mormon success among the "unchurched masses," certainly must have made the work of the



Mormon proselyters easier than if they had had to overcome a disposition favoring social elitism and autocracy.

In sampling the conversion accounts of early converts, one gets the impression that those who converted were from homes in which religious values were dominant; only one indicated that he had a tendency toward infidelity in religious matters! The converts did not have to be convinced of the importance of religious belief—they were apparently predisposed to believing. What they identified in Mormonism satisfied some sort of idiosyncratic interest or longing. Alexander Baird recounted that even as a child he was puzzled over the belief that God would want to send children to hell and that he and his sister often prayed in the fields that this would not be their fate. When he heard a Mormon elder discourse about the Mormon concept of a loving God, he “knew” immediately that the doctrine was true and at the age of fourteen was baptized.<sup>51</sup>

James Ure recounted that he considered all the contending factions of Christianity corrupt and held aloof from them. When Ure first heard Alexander Wright and Samuel Mulliner preach, he was astonished to find that “two plain, simple and seemingly illiterate men” could be the bearers of the restored gospel. “I unhesitatingly received their testimony, embraced the Gospel, went and was baptized.”<sup>52</sup> Some, like John Duncan, were attracted by the practice of immersion which to them had always seemed to be the correct way to be baptized.<sup>53</sup> Alexander Gillespie was attracted to the Mormon message because of the impression the missionaries had given him. He wanted to know more about an organization which could produce “such excellent young men” and applied the “by-their-fruits-ye-shall-know-them” test in deciding whether to join the Mormons.<sup>54</sup>

Robert Gillespie was convinced by the arguments given in debates between Mormons and non-Mormons. The Mormons usually “came out best” although they were unlearned.<sup>55</sup> When William MacMaster first decided to attend a Mormon meeting, he did so because he wanted to satisfy himself if all the rumors being spread about the Mormons in Paisley were true. He heard Samuel Mulliner preach and was immediately convinced that what the preacher from America had said was true. He arose in that same meeting, bore testimony, and was baptized three weeks later as one of the first eighty persons to join the Mormon church in Scotland.<sup>56</sup>

JoAnn Walker heard the message from her fellow factory worker, Elizabeth Stuart, as she worked at her loom in a factory. At her first meeting she witnessed the gift of tongues demonstrated, the interpretations of which indicated to her that she would join the Church and be gathered to Zion. She did both.<sup>57</sup> William McFarland and his friend, Thomas Crooks, had been actively seeking the true religion and



had visited all the churches in the town of Dysart, Fife. When George D. Watt brought the Mormon message to the village, McFarland told him that if the Mormons could give them the knowledge that angels had indeed appeared to Joseph Smith then Watt could “dip him in any mudhole he pleased.” Both McFarland and Crooks were baptized.<sup>58</sup> For some, like Robert McKinlay, the process of being converted extended over a number of years culminating in a manifestation involving a heavenly messenger who showed McKinlay in vision that the non-Mormon churches in Lochgelly were surrounded with darkness, while the Mormon meeting place was bathed in light. That was enough to convince McKinlay, and from then on he knew Mormonism was true.<sup>59</sup>

Most of the converts were young men in their late teens or early twenties, and their conversion accounts focused on the one idea or notion that seemed to attract them to the Mormon religion. Some no doubt joined because of the influence of family members or close friends; some may have been baptized because of guilt feelings over sin or unworthiness; some were convinced because they witnessed healings and speaking in tongues. There is even evidence to indicate that the great cholera plague of the late 1840s in the west of Scotland “scared a great many into the church”—either because they believed they were in imminent danger of dying in a sinful state or out of a belief that being a Mormon would save them from the cholera.<sup>60</sup>

In these accounts it can be seen that conversion to Mormonism was a process characterized by a great deal of diversity running all the way from what appeared to listeners to be the plain logic of the Mormon position, which seemed to characterize Robert Gillespie’s experience, to the almost mystical experience of Robert McKinlay. Although Mormons preached “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” there was also a decidedly individualistic refrain in the testimonies which have been recorded. Everyone seemed to have come to his or her testimony from a slightly different perspective. The religious experience had to meet the individual needs of the converts.

### III

The Presbyterian response to Mormon truth claims was to dismiss it as not being a genuine religious experience and that ignorance, credulity, poverty, and despair were at the roots of Mormon success. When the Edinburgh Presbytery debated the question of church support of state aid to schools in Scotland, the Moderator, the Reverend Dr. Robert Lee, referred to the “fearful ignorance that prevailed” in the “manufacturing parishes” that he had had under his care. Lee noted that much had been made in Scotland of the ignorance in the county of Kent, England, where a man named Thoms had claimed to be the Messiah and



had collected a following. Scots, he implied, should not forget that they too had ignorant masses, for instance:

When Mormonism was first preached in the west of Scotland, there appeared there a man who preached absurdities so gross that one wondered that any man, even a Hottentot, could receive them and believe them. And what was the result, even in the midst of all their parish schools and educational institutions! It was a fact that hundreds of persons were baptized in the faith of Joe Smith, and that scores of Scotchmen were at present expiating the follies of which they were then guilty at Nauvoo. With facts like these, would any man pretend that nothing was wanted in the education of Scotland!<sup>61</sup>

Lee's assessment of Mormonism as appealing to the "fearful ignorance" of the masses can be seen as a typical intellectual, and in large measure, secularized response of a Church of Scotland which in many ways had lost touch with its own New Testament roots as well as with the industrial masses. The established church had become very respectable, rational, and institutional in its interpretation of Christianity. As noted earlier, if the kirk could brand some of its own sons as heretics for encouraging the millennialist and restorationist movement in the west of Scotland in April 1830, it should not come as a surprise that they considered the Mormon claims to spiritual power as counterfeit and founded in credulity and ignorance. The emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit being used by uneducated Mormons was enough to brand them as fanatics in the eyes of the official kirk.

Lee's comments also reflect the dominant middle-class bias of the kirk's leadership in their belief that literacy and Bible reading would "console, reconcile and redeem" the unchurched, urban working classes.<sup>62</sup> Although the Church of Scotland attempted to recapture the allegiance of the workers, they were not able to make any substantial inroads among the workers until they moderated some of their middle-class orientation and began to take an active part in efforts to change the social conditions of the workers. With typical Protestant faith in the value of education, Lee seemed to be saying that if people in the industrialized areas were literate they would not have become prey to the blandishments of Mormon fanaticism.

In 1849 the *Kilmarnock Standard* ridiculed the pretentious claims of the Mormons; poked fun at a local man, "St. John," for claiming power to heal the sick; and followed it through with an account of a failed attempt at healing by a " 'high priest,' a neighbouring weaver." The lack of hearing and the hunchback persisted even after repeated attempts to effect a cure, and the article concluded: "It may be mentioned that the adherents of Mormonism in this quarter of the country are invariably characterized by their ignorance."<sup>63</sup> Partly because they drew people from the unlettered and unchurched masses then and partly because they



claimed to be able to effect cures on the physically ill, Mormons were viewed as ignorant fanatics not worthy of serious consideration in press reports.

However, it was not just Mormons who were viewed in this light. Even Wesleyan Methodists were characterized as being a subclass of ignorant people in the larger cities and a Presbyterian sponsored religious revival in Kilsyth in 1839 brought this censure from *The Scotsman*: "Surely the pure and rational religion of Christ has no connection with these faintings and convulsions. . . . Is it not evident that a faith planted in this way has its roots in the nerves and not in the rational faculties?"<sup>64</sup> Although the Mormons were never given to "faintings and convulsions" as manifestations of the Spirit, no doubt the kirk saw Mormonism as decidedly rooted in irrationality. What was and was not acceptable in religion was based on the premise that the kirk had the correct, rational interpretation of true religion. Consequently, the establishment condemned with equal vigor both native-born and foreign enthusiasts who departed from traditional patterns of belief and practice. For the Latter-day Saints, however, there was the added onus that not only were they misled, irrational, and ignorant, but according to the Reverend John R. Swan of the Bonhill Relief Presbyterian Church, the "Mormonites" were also advocates of "gross heresy & error."<sup>65</sup>

Criticism was not limited to rhetoric, but was also expressed in acts of violence. Latter-day Saints were stoned in Kirkpatrick and mobbed in Busby, and Joseph Smith's effigy was burned at the tollbooth in Clackmannan in 1842. At Crosshill in Ayrshire in 1849 a mob of three hundred men, women, and children surrounded the house in which the meeting was being held and disrupted the assembled Saints with howling and the throwing of stones. After the meeting, a hundred members of the mob followed the Mormons to Maybole throwing stones and abusing them. In Ayrshire in 1844 Robert Campbell reported that a number of investigators were prevented from joining the Church because of being "bound down by their tyrannical employers" who threatened to dismiss persons who became Mormons.<sup>66</sup> So threatening did the disruptions become in Edinburgh in 1850 that the *Report of the Edinburgh Conference* carried the official British law which prohibited the disruption of religious assemblies.<sup>67</sup> When a mob actually broke up a Mormon meeting in Paisley, its leaders were arrested for disturbing the peace. The magistrate promised that he would mete out heavy punishment if they attempted to disturb another Mormon meeting, asserting that Scottish law would protect the preacher in the barn as well as the one in the pulpit.<sup>68</sup>

However, the law did get involved against the Mormons when Elder Thomas Stewart's reliance on the healing gifts of the Spirit led to his being charged with culpable homicide in the deaths of two young



Mormon women, Elizabeth and Mary Murray. The *Glasgow Herald*, reporting the case under the headline “Extraordinary Case. Cholera Treatment by the Latter-day Saints,” said it didn’t know whether to characterize the affair as one of “inhumanity, barbarism or fanaticism.” The report criticized the elders for failing to call medical aid for the two women and belittled the efforts of the elders to cure cholera through prayer and anointing. According to the newspaper report a group of male members of the Mormon church “with sisters to match . . . ranted around the bed of the poor girls all night till they died, instead of sending for a doctor.”<sup>69</sup> Although a charge of culpable homicide was made against Stewart, the *Millennial Star* reported that when he was brought before the magistrates, “he bore himself nobly, faced his accusers boldly, preached the Gospel to them in his defence, until they were ashamed of themselves, and were glad to dismiss the matter.”<sup>70</sup>

This newspaper account also reveals a degree of class bias in its reporting the death of the two young women when it lists the trades of those who participated in the all-night vigil: a belt maker, two weavers, a clerk, a sawyer, and a collier. In doing so the *Glasgow Herald* seems to be holding up to ridicule the Mormon assumption that common people without any special training can be intermediaries in spiritual and even medical matters—not quite the conventional view of the requirements for the ministerial or healing professions. Such comments seem to suggest that Mormonism was criticized as much because of its close association with the working classes as for its peculiar or erroneous theology.

The formal religious journals of the day also responded negatively to the upstarts from America. That such a system founded on superstition could manage to find any adherents in Scotland at all was something of a surprise to rational Presbyterians who also saw a “striking analogy betwixt Mormonism and Popery, between Joe Smith and Pius the Ninth.” Both churches were perceived as “of human or rather of Satanic origin.” Both added to the scriptures, practiced despotism, controlled their people through physical force, and made great profession of religion. Ultimately, said the editor of *The Bulwark*, “Mormons and Papists will probably unite; but at all events they are only two branches of Satan’s great army against the truth and liberty of the gospel of Christ.”<sup>71</sup> There is some irony in this comparison, because Catholicism in the nineteenth century was viewed by both Mormons and Scottish Presbyterians as the ultimate model of apostasy. It must indeed have been disconcerting for Mormons to find the Prophet Joseph being linked in the Presbyterian mind with the “man of sin” himself—Pius the Ninth. For the Presbyterians, however, democratic participation in the government of church and state, even when it leads to some confusion and disruption, was to be preferred over the control which both Catholicism and



Mormonism was perceived as exerting over their followers in Catholic-dominated countries and in Mormon-dominated Nauvoo and Utah.

Mormonism's peculiar institution, polygamy, also stimulated discussion—albeit reluctantly—in the religious press. An editorial in the *United Presbyterian Magazine* in 1852 referred to the “mysterious orgies of the Nauvoo temple” and the “plural wife system,” and the editorial admitted that it was with some reluctance that it made any reference at all to Mormonism with its immoralities. However, the editor did so only because such publication “might perhaps do good in warning some thoughtless persons meditating emigration to the great theocratic settlement in America.”<sup>72</sup> The October 1853 issue observed that Mormonism was growing rapidly in the United States and that it was “not a little humbling to observe that while this increase is occasioned by importations from Europe, the largest number go from Britain.”<sup>73</sup> It is not possible to know how many Scots were “saved” from the Mormons by the religious press, but it is not unreasonable to assume that it played some role in reducing the numbers of converts over the years.

In spite of a poor press, and being characterized as superstitious, ignorant, credulous, and under the complete control of their leaders, thousands of Scots listened, believed the message from America, and joined the Mormon church. The faith they espoused became an important part of their personal value system, gave them a deep sense of their place in the world, and contributed to their perception of themselves as a people with a mission—to build the kingdom of God in the last days. In this respect they were also aligning themselves with the traditional perception of Scotland as a redemptory nation. According to Bernard Aspinwall, nineteenth-century Scots perceived their nation's mission in essentially religious terms, and in this way they easily identified with the American ethos: “Whatever force drove the Scots forth, they could find solace in some providential plan for individual, national and universal regeneration. They had been and still were a chosen people.”<sup>74</sup> Because of this the Scots related easily to America and its values. If this is indeed an accurate description of the Scottish temper it may also explain why so many Scots gave their allegiance to the prototypical American religion, Mormonism.

#### IV

If the years between 1840 and 1870 were bountiful years for the growth of Mormonism in Scotland and give the appearance of a field ready to harvest, the 1870s and 1880s may best be described as sparse and with the appearance of a pasture well-trodden over. The foregoing discussion has attempted to delineate a sense of some of the social, economic, and personal factors which may have contributed to the early



success of the Mormon missionaries. Also suggested were some of the internal Mormon circumstances (reduced conversion rates, increased excommunications, and emigration) which depleted the Church and kept it from growing. To round out the picture it is necessary now to briefly consider some of the external, non-Mormon factors which may have had a bearing on the reduced capability of the Mormon missionaries to make converts in the period 1870 to 1900. It should be noted, however, that what follows is more in the nature of a series of hypotheses which need further investigation than a list of thoroughly documented historical conclusions, at least as far as explaining the Mormon decline is concerned.

Scotland of the last part of the nineteenth century was a different country from that of the 1840s and 1850s. Although there was persistent depression in trade accompanied by price declines during the period 1873 to 1896, Scottish workers still enjoyed relative prosperity during these years.<sup>75</sup> In the social arena many of the reforms the Chartists and others had fought for had been realized as universal education became a reality, public health measures made cities safer places in which to live, and working people acquired more power through extension of the franchise. It is no accident that two of the first members of the British Parliament representing the rising power of the labor unions were Scots, Alexander MacDonald in the 1870s and Keir Hardie in 1892. Hardie, the miner's leader from Ayrshire, is generally recognized as one of the founders of the British Labour party and partly because of its Scottish roots and Keir Hardie's role in its founding, British Socialism developed a strong moral and religious overtone. Absent were the strident and bitter tones which characterized the Marxist perspectives. In their place was a "strong redemptive urge" which even saw the creation of Scottish Labor Churches and Socialist Sunday Schools in the 1890s: "Socialism, for Hardie, was the industrial expression of Christianity."<sup>76</sup> If the lay features of Mormonism had attracted some Scots in the 1840s, the possibility of the working classes seeing their political aspirations realized in the 1880s may also have taken the edge off the Mormon appeal in the later years.

In addition to recognizing the aspirations of the working classes for more political power, there was a revival of interest in the preservation of Scotland's cultural heritage and increased sensitivity on the part of the centralized government in London to the need for some degree of devolution in the government of Scotland. During the 1880s it was recognized that the needs of the Scots were not well served by the London government. Consequently, a Secretary for Scotland was appointed and adjustments were made which gave Scots a fairer representation in the imperial Parliament. When felt needs for national identity were attended to, there may have been less impetus for fewer Scots to identify with Mormon "nationalism."<sup>77</sup>



Important as the foregoing developments may have been for the decline of Mormonism in Scotland, perhaps the most compelling reason lies in the fact that the Presbyterian church of the 1880s had undergone a revolution and was not at all like the kirk of the 1840s. The traditional, austere, sparse theology and practice of its basic Calvinism had collapsed by the 1880s. The extreme emphasis upon predestination and the notion that God had already chosen his elect, the literal interpretation of the Bible, and an obsession with Sabbath-keeping gave way to a church dominated by the "healing of the New Testament" rather than the "ferocities of the Old Testament."<sup>78</sup>

The changes were not only in theology, however. The mode of worship changed with the introduction of hymn singing in 1864, and in the following year the Reverend Norman McLeod took a public stand against the Sabbatarians who supported the closing of public parks on Sunday, the only day that the workingman and his family could enjoy some recreation. Pews in church were no longer dependent on fees, and inhibitions on how one should dress for worship were removed.

In such ways the established kirk began to bridge the gap which had separated it from so many of Scotland's working class. In addition, the Church of Scotland recognized the need for active intervention on behalf of those who had been dispossessed by the Industrial Revolution: the existence of extremes of poverty and wealth was inconsistent with the concept of the social gospel. Church leaders seemed to be moving toward accepting the notion that "religion could only be real once a certain material level of living had been attained,"<sup>79</sup> an idea which finds its echo in the traditional Mormon notion that a "religion which has not the power to save men temporally and make them prosperous and happy here, cannot be depended on to save them spiritually."<sup>80</sup>

The transformation of the Church of Scotland was not simply a pragmatic accommodation to the realities of the age and its own need to survive as an institution. The change from a rigid Calvinism to a more liberal and humane perspective was rooted in a genuine intellectual and spiritual ferment and questioning which came to a head in the 1880s. Concurrently another kind of American religion came to Scotland when the noted evangelist and preacher Dwight L. Moody and the singer Ira D. Sankey brought their revival crusade to Caledonia in 1873. While there had been opposition to earlier emotion-filled revivals in the 1840s, the kind of revival instigated by Moody and Sankey in the 1870s took Scotland by storm and influenced the religious scene there more profoundly than in England. The enthusiastic preaching, the joyous singing, and the sense of "uplift, together with happy conversion" brought to the Scots a "religious populism that cut across theological refinements by its fundamental appeal."<sup>81</sup> If this is an accurate assessment of the impact of the Moody and Sankey type of revival, then



one can see within its success yet another factor which made the Mormons—with their emphasis on an Old Testament type of leadership, practice of polygamy, precise definitions of what is correct belief, and exclusive claims to being the only true church—less appealing to the Scots of the late nineteenth century.

The revitalization of the kirk did not mean that all of Scotland had been transformed into a nation dominated by spiritual concerns; as in all of Western Europe, the drift towards secularism could not be stayed by the enthusiasm of a Moody and Sankey revival, a regenerated Church of Scotland, or even aggressive Mormon proselyting. However, the long-term trend in the secularization of society, accompanied by the revitalization of the kirk, the popular involvement in the political process, and even the rise of spectator sports such as Scotland's national "fitba," were more than a match for the Mormon message.

Not that Mormons didn't try to convert the Scots during these "gie dreich" years—there was an average of fourteen full-time missionaries in Scotland during the 1890s, and time and energy were expended in reaching out to the population via the newspapers. In the 1870s David O. Calder traveled fifteen hundred miles throughout Scotland meeting with editors, merchants, manufacturers, ministers, "and others of the middle classes" but with little apparent return for his efforts.<sup>82</sup> In 1889 the Scottish Conference president, Samuel T. Whitaker, conducted a newspaper campaign to inform Scotland about the Mormon message and claimed to have borne his testimony to 3.6 million people in this way. He spent a lot of time responding to "absurd ideas" which people had about the Mormons; some imagined that Mormon is another name for "marry" and that to become a Mormon meant "instantaneous wedlock without limit." Some inquirers were unaware that Mormons were believers in the Bible or that it was a religion at all, and one man expressed the desire to be "baptized into Utah."<sup>83</sup>

No matter how hard the Mormons worked (or prayed), no matter how many missionaries were assigned to Scotland, no matter how many new ways of awakening the people to their message were tried, relatively few people responded, and Mormonism in Scotland almost became dormant. A faithful remnant persisted, however, and if the reports in the *Millennial Star* reflect fewer and fewer baptisms, they exude a note of hopefulness (pathetic at times) that Scotland would yet see better days. But the better days never came in the nineteenth century. Not until the 1960s, with new social and economic conditions, a new kind of Mormonism, and a radically different approach to proselyting, would the number of Mormons in Scotland climb above the benchmark of some 3,300 set almost a century before.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For the details of Wright's and Mulliner's travels in the initial phase of missionary work in Scotland see Alexander Wright, *Diary, 1839–44*, and entries for 1840 in the Manuscript History of the Scottish Mission, Library–Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter referred to as LDS Church Archives).

<sup>2</sup>Daniel B. Weber, "The Transcendental Wilderness Aesthetics of John Muir," in *The World of John Muir*, ed. L. R. Murphy and D. Colins (Stockton, Calif.: University of the Pacific, 1981), 2.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia: Glasgow and the United States 1820–1920* (Aberdeen, Scotland: Aberdeen University Press, 1984), 2.

<sup>4</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks*, ed. Randall Stewart (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1941), 535–36.

<sup>5</sup>Sidney Checkland and Olive Checkland, *Industry and Ethos: Scotland 1832–1914* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 25.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>7</sup>For a contemporary account of the impact of industrialization on the traditional religious community see Alexander Watt, "Social and Moral Conditions of the Manufacturing Districts in Scotland," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 50 (1841): 659–73. See also Checkland and Checkland, *Industry and Ethos*, 119–23; and James Mackinnon, *The Social and Industrial History of Scotland from the Union to the Present Time* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), 151–54, 226.

<sup>8</sup>Rowland A. Davenport, *Aldbury Apostles: The Story of the Body Known as the Catholic Apostolic Church (Sometimes Called the "Irvingites")* (London: Neillgo Publications, 1971), 27.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 29–35.

<sup>10</sup>Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), 164. There is also a record of a delegation of Irvingites from Barnsley, England, visiting Joseph Smith around 1835 with the intent of offering the Mormons financial assistance if their religious views coincided (see "History of Joseph Smith," *Millennial Star* 15 (23 April 1853): 260.

<sup>11</sup>Joseph Smith, Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951), 210. Professor Joseph F. McConkie drew this reference to my attention.

<sup>12</sup>Statistics are based on reports appearing in *Millennial Star* 1 (May 1840): 20; 10 (15 August 1848): 253; 13 (1 July 1851): 207; 14 (1 January 1852): 15; 15 (29 January 1853): 78; and in the British Mission Statistical Record, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>13</sup>The "reflex of despair" motif as applied to the English Mormons is discussed in Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1963), 801–2. Thompson deliberately does not include the Scottish working-class experience in his book because of cultural differences between the two nations (13). Although the differences between English and Scottish culture begin to disappear after 1820, it is still important to keep in mind the separate identity which Scotland attempted to maintain (at least at the level of popular culture) even after 1820. One might even wonder if there might not exist some distinctive Scottish responses to Mormonism which are glossed over by the tendency of many historians to assume that the English and Scottish experiences were the same. Detailed analysis of Scottish Mormons in terms of their class, occupational structure, educational backgrounds, religious predilections, etc., would be necessary to answer this query.

<sup>14</sup>William Gibson, Journal, 130, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>15</sup>Dickens is cited in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, eds., *Among the Mormons* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 339.

<sup>16</sup>Peter McIntyre, Autobiography, MS, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Marriott Library).

<sup>17</sup>Elder Gibson to Orson Spencer, in *Millennial Star* 9 (1 December 1847): 362.

<sup>18</sup>Comparison of Scottish conferences is based on data for years indicated in British Mission Statistical Record, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>19</sup>"Editorial," *Millennial Star* 10 (1 October 1848): 299.

<sup>20</sup>Peter M'Neill, *Tranent and Its Surroundings* (Edinburgh: John Menzies and Co., 1883), 79–80.

<sup>21</sup>Hamilton G. Park to Brigham Young, 14 October 1869, Brigham Young Letter Press Book, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>22</sup>David McKenzie to Brigham Young, 22 December 1874 and 10 December 1875, in Brigham Young Letterbook, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>23</sup>"The Work in Scotland," 1 June 1885, in *Millennial Star* 47 (8 June 1885): 366.

<sup>24</sup>"The Work in Scotland," 19 January 1885, in *Millennial Star* 47 (26 January 1885): 63.

<sup>25</sup>"Letter from John Crawford, Glasgow," 5 January 1883, in *Ogden Daily Herald*.

<sup>26</sup>Statistics are based on British Mission Statistical Reports in *Millennial Star* 46 (28 January 1884): 54; 53 (9 February 1891): 86; and British Mission Statistical Record, LDS Church Archives.



<sup>27</sup>Hamilton G. Park to Brigham Young, 15 October 1869, Brigham Young Letter Press Book, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>28</sup>Letter of H. Findlay to William Budge, *Millennial Star* 42 (8 March 1880):156.

<sup>29</sup>“Minutes of a Conference of the Priesthood,” *Millennial Star* 35 (17 June 1873):379–81; Hamilton G. Park to Brigham Young, 15 November 1869, Brigham Young Letter Press Book, LDS Church Archives; David McKenzie to Brigham Young, 10 December 1875, Brigham Young Letter Press Book, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>30</sup>*Millennial Star* 32 (1 March 1870): 136.

<sup>31</sup>For information contained in tables 1 and 2, see statistical accounts of the Edinburgh Conference, 1840–68; Glasgow Conference, 1840–80; and Scottish Conference, 1880–99, in LDS Church Archives. Although there may be some slight discrepancies in the total figures because of the absence of some Dundee and Kilmarnock statistics, it appears that these figures give an accurate account of the overall trends.

<sup>32</sup>Scottish Conference Minutes, 7 August 1899, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>33</sup>Henry Hamilton, Journal, 28 November 1855, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>34</sup>See statistical accounts of the Edinburgh Conference, 1840–68; Glasgow Conference, 1840–80; and Scottish Conference, 1880–99.

<sup>35</sup>“Instructions on Excommunicating Members,” *Millennial Star* 23 (16 March 1861): 170.

<sup>36</sup>David M. Stuart to Amasa Lyman, 13 December 1860, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>37</sup>Manuscript History of the Edinburgh Conference, 9 March 1851, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*; Falkirk Branch Historical Record, 21 March 1852, 18 April 1852, 20 January 1856, 28 March 1858, LDS Church Archives. See also Andrew Sprowl, Diary, 21 March 1847, typescript, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City; *Report of the Glasgow Quarterly Conference*, 24–25 March 1849 and 24 June 1849; Letter of Eli B. Kelsey to Pres. O. Pratt, *Millennial Star* 11 (15 March 1849): 92.

<sup>39</sup>*Report of the Glasgow Conference*, 24–25 March 1849. Reference to the “Chartist Elder” can be found in Matthew Rowan, Journal, 22 May 1849, typescript, Utah State Historical Society.

<sup>40</sup>Margaret Gillespie Rawlings, “Biographical Sketch of Alexander Gillespie,” typescript, copy in possession of Richard L. Anderson, Provo.

<sup>41</sup>Dalry Branch Record of Members, June 1850, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>42</sup>Henry Hamilton, Diary, 16 September 1852, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>43</sup>Source for the occupational structure is Liverpool Emigration Records, 1855–70, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>44</sup>Malcolm Thorp, “The Religious Background of Mormon Converts in Britain, 1837–52,” *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977): 51–66.

<sup>45</sup>“An Address to the Radical Reformers of Ayrshire. By an Ayrshire Radical Reformer” (Kilmarnock, Scotland: Ayrshire Examiner Office, 1838), 2.

<sup>46</sup>Samuel W. Richards to Mary Haskin Richards, 26 January 1848, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>47</sup>Charles Hamilton to Parley P. Pratt, in *Millennial Star* 2 (March 1842): 169.

<sup>48</sup>Edward W. Tullidge, “Biographical Appendix,” in *History of Northern Utah and Southern Idaho* (Salt Lake City: N.p., 1889), 330.

<sup>49</sup>Gibson, Journal, 58.

<sup>50</sup>John Greenleaf Whittier, “A Mormon Conventicle,” reprinted in *Millennial Star* 10 (1 October 1848): 302. See also comments of William J. Coneybeare in “Mormonism,” *Edinburgh Review* 99 (1854): 382–83 regarding the attraction of a lay ministry to Mormon converts.

<sup>51</sup>Alexander Baird, “Autobiography,” typescript, photocopy in author’s possession. It should be noted that this and the accounts in notes 52–59 were written after the persons had become members of the LDS Church—no diary that the writer examined had a contemporary account of the process of conversion. Most accounts are found at the beginning of a diary as an introduction to the events which followed baptism. This may explain why most of them have a decidedly Mormon flavor.

<sup>52</sup>James Ure, Diary, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>53</sup>John Duncan, Autobiographical Letter, 1902, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>54</sup>Rawlings, “Autobiographical Sketch.”

<sup>55</sup>Robert Gillespie, Diary, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>56</sup>William A. McMaster, Diary, Marriott Library.

<sup>57</sup>William Richardson, “Autobiography,” 12, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>58</sup>“Autobiographical Sketch of Archibald McFarland,” photocopy in author’s possession.

<sup>59</sup>“The Vision of Robert McKinlay,” typescript, in possession of Richard L. Anderson, Provo.

<sup>60</sup>William Richardson, “Autobiography,” 7, LDS Church Archives. See also Eli Kelsey, Journal, 26 October 1848 and 27 February 1849, cited in the Manuscript History of the Glasgow Conference 1848–49, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>61</sup>*The Scotsman*, 1 May 1847.

<sup>62</sup>Checkland and Checkland, *Industry and Ethos*, 124.

<sup>63</sup>*Glasgow Herald*, 5 February 1849.

<sup>64</sup>*The Scotsman*, 2 October 1839.

<sup>65</sup>Session minutes of the Bonhill Relief Church, 18 October 1841. Paul Smart of the LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City, drew my attention to this item.

<sup>66</sup>Gibson, Journal. See also Robert Campbell, Journal, 3 July 1844, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo; and Eli Kelsey, Journal, 9 May 1849, cited in Manuscript History of the Glasgow Conference, LDS Church Archives.



<sup>67</sup>*Report of the Edinburgh Conference*, January–June 1850, 8, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>68</sup>Gibson, *Journal*, 8.

<sup>69</sup>*Glasgow Herald*, 22 January 1849.

<sup>70</sup>Eli B. Kelsey to President Orson Pratt, *Millennial Star* 11 (15 February 1849): 61–62.

<sup>71</sup>*The Free Church Magazine* 8 (1851): 369; *The Bulwark or Reformation Journal* 2 (1852–53): 166. The comment in *The Bulwark* was prompted by an article in the Jesuit *Dublin Review* which asserted that the existence of Mormonism was an example of what was wrong with Protestantism.

<sup>72</sup>*United Presbyterian Magazine*, March 1852.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, October 1853.

<sup>74</sup>Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia*, xiii.

<sup>75</sup>I am indebted to Professor Richard Tompson of the department of history, University of Utah, for this insight.

<sup>76</sup>Checkland and Checkland, *Industry and Ethos*, 76–80.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 167–71.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 118–19.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>80</sup>Joseph F. Smith, “The Truth about Mormonism,” *Out West* 23 (September 1905): 242.

<sup>81</sup>Checkland and Checkland, *Industry and Ethos*, 124–25.

<sup>82</sup>David O. Calder to President Albert Carrington, *Millennial Star* 34 (15 July 1872): 475

<sup>83</sup>Samuel T. Whitaker to John M. Whitaker, 25 May 1889, John M. Whitaker Papers, Marriott Library.



# The Reverend W. R. Davies vs. Captain Dan Jones

Ronald D. Dennis

In 1838 when forty-year-old William Robert Davies was ordained minister of the Baptist Caersalem Chapel in Dowlais (two miles from Merthyr Tydfil) he had probably never heard of the Latter-day Saints. Halfway into his eleven-year ministry at Caersalem, he would become the most vociferous foe of Mormonism in Wales. In addition to constant sermons against the new religion, Davies also published extensively in the various religious periodicals. And all of this opposition was conducted according to the established “modus operandi” for the nineteenth-century polemic.

Elder William Henshaw, the earliest Mormon missionary sent to the Merthyr Tydfil area, reported his first baptisms on 19 February 1843, just a matter of weeks after beginning his mission. Among Henshaw’s first dozen baptisms was one of W. R. Davies’s congregation, and it was no doubt this conversion that brought Davies into the arena.

In an unpublished letter in Welsh dated 6 May 1843 Davies commented on the newcomers:

There is here a new sect, the “Latter-day Saints,” as they call themselves; they baptize as we do, and that at night. They profess to be able to do everything which the apostles could do: to heal the sick, cast out devils, raise the dead, speak in tongues, etc., etc. Their minister has been in the house with me trying to convince me. He is having success and has baptized from 10 to 12 in the last three months. And he baptized one woman who was a member with us.<sup>1</sup>

Ten months later, a brief article of Davies’s appeared in the March 1844 issue of *Y Bedyddiwr* [The Baptist], one of the many religious periodicals in the Welsh language then being published. Under the pseudonym of “Tobit ger y bont” [Tobit near the bridge], Davies presents a 600-word diatribe against the Mormons. The first few sentences are indicative of his approach to dealing with the Mormons during the next five years until his death in 1849 of cholera:

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Ronald D. Dennis is a professor of Portuguese and Welsh at Brigham Young University.



The foolish and mad men who call themselves "Latter-day Saints" have arrived in Pendaran [sic]. [Penydarren is an area contiguous to Merthyr Tydfil.] They profess to work miracles, to prophesy, to speak in unknown tongues, yea, in a word to do everything that the apostles did. I am sorry to say that a number of dregs of society are now believers. They baptize at night, and those receiving baptism must undress for them and go to the water stark naked!<sup>2</sup>

Davies then relates an attempt made by the Mormons to heal one of their sisters who was in hysterics. The first blessing was unsuccessful, so someone was sent to fetch William Henshaw, to whom Davies refers with four epithets: "the high deceiver," "the great prophet," "the father of them all" and "the chief apostle." After Henshaw's failure—this according to Davies, of course—a doctor was sent for. The physician determined that the lady had given birth to a child which had died in the process. Davies's final comment: "I did not think there were men so stupid in Wales to believe such a heap of nonsense and presumption."<sup>3</sup>

After the appearance of this article, Davies was a frequent contributor of anti-Mormon writings to *Y Bedyddiwr* and several other periodicals. Listed in table 1 are his published anti-Mormon writings found in the most prominent religious publications of the 1840s. The brief comments in the third column are merely an indication of the most salient characteristic of each item, and the number of words in the final column is an approximation. Table 2 is a list of published Mormon writings about W. R. Davies's writings.

In a 1,500-word article in the April 1844 *Y Bedyddiwr* (no. 2, table 1) Davies announces in a spirit of fair play his intention to give "a small account of their failure together with their successes." It would be unfair, he says, "to falsely accuse Satan despite all his Satanness, and by the same principle it would be a pity to put the weakest side and only that before the public."<sup>4</sup> According to Davies, the Mormons were preaching in a camp meeting in Georgetown, an area of Merthyr Tydfil; there they were countered by Dafydd Oliver, a member of the Baptist church. After the Mormon preacher had finished his "foolish and devilish chatter," Dafydd Oliver asked some questions which resulted in a "heated and fierce debate." Oliver then "took hold of him with invincible strength, showing him to be a satanic and presumptuous wretch, trying to blind a few of the weakheaded fools who followed him, into believing that he was speaking infallibly, and was a recipient of visions and revelations from God."<sup>5</sup>

The camp meeting turned into a debate, and the opponents met on two other occasions. To conclude the third and final round, James Wilkins, a Baptist minister, asked permission to address the listeners. According to Davies, the Reverend Wilkins then "demonstrated the stupidity and arrogance" of the Mormon missionaries and announced



TABLE 1  
Published Anti-Mormon Writings of W. R. Davies

|     |      |      |  |  |             |
|-----|------|------|--|--|-------------|
| 1.  | 1844 | Mar. | <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> ,<br>99-100                         | Account of a failed healing  | 600 words   |
| 2.  |      | Apr. | <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> ,<br>123-24                         | Some successes and failures  | 1,500 words |
| 3.  | 1846 | Mar. | <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> ,<br>91-93                          | A reply to a letter supposedly<br>written by Abel Evans and<br>William Henshaw       | 1,700 words |
| 4.  |      | Mar. | <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> ,<br>111-12                         | The supposed healing of<br>William Hughes's leg                                      | 650 words   |
| 5.  |      | Mar. | Separate<br>pamphlet                                   | "The Latter Saints. The<br>substance of a sermon<br>given on the miracles."          | 20 pages    |
| 6.  |      | June | <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> ,<br>23                             | Comments about the<br>"forged" letter  | 750 words   |
| 7.  | 1847 | Jan. | <i>Seren Gomer</i> ,<br>7-8                            | Zeal without knowledge   | 2,000 words |
| 8.  |      | July | Separate<br>pamphlet                                   | A nonextant reworking of<br>no. 5  |             |
| 9.  |      | Sep. | <i>Y Tyst</i> ,<br>199-201                             | Why the Latter-day Saints<br>should be called "The<br>Nineteenth-century Satanists"  | 1,800 words |
| 10. |      | Dec. | <i>Seren Gomer</i> ,<br>368                            | Predictions about the<br>Mormons   | 600 words   |
| 11. |      | Dec. | <i>Seren Gomer</i> ,<br>375-76                         | A warning to the Welsh<br>about the Mormons  | 800 words   |
| 12. | 1848 | Jan. | <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> ,<br>16-17                          | Quotes from other sources  | 850 words   |
| 13. |      | Feb. | <i>Y Drysorfa</i><br><i>Gynnulleidfaol</i> ,<br>37-38  | Quote from the <i>Ottawa Free<br/>Trader</i> (identical to second<br>half of no. 14) | 450 words   |
| 14. |      | June | <i>Y Drysorfa</i><br><i>Gynnulleidfaol</i> ,<br>168-70 | A variety of Mormon<br>offenses  | 1,900 words |
| 15. |      | June | <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> ,<br>209-11                         | Arguments against baptism<br>for the dead  | 1,500 words |
| 16. |      | July | <i>Seren Gomer</i> ,<br>201-2                          | The failure of the Mormons<br>to cast out evil spirits                               | 1,300 words |
| 17. | 1849 | Aug. | <i>Seren Gomer</i> ,<br>248                            | Effect of the cholera on<br>membership   | 250 words   |



TABLE 2  
Published Mormon Writings about W. R. Davies's Anti-Mormon Writings

|     |      |      |  |   |             |
|-----|------|------|--|---|-------------|
| 1.  | 1846 | Feb. | <i>Atebydd y Gwrthddadleuon</i> , 22     | Identification by Dan Jones of W. R. Davies as the person behind the pseudonyms | 200 words   |
| 2.  |      | May  | <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> , 193-94              | A letter of clarification by Abel Evans and William Henshaw                     | 170 words   |
| 3.  |      | July | <i>Prophwyd y Jubili</i> , 22-28         | Refutation of Davies's accusations in <i>Y Bedyddiwr</i> for March 1846         | 3,000 words |
| 4.  |      | Sep. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 70-78                  | A review of Davies's pamphlet (first installment)                               | 4,000 words |
| 5.  |      | Sep. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 78-84                  | In defense of Evans and Henshaw   | 3,200 words |
| 6.  |      | Oct. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 107-9                  | A review of Davies's pamphlet (second installment)                              | 1,100 words |
| 7.  |      | Nov. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 128-31                 | A review of Davies's pamphlet (third installment)                               | 2,000 words |
| 8.  |      | Dec. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 156-60                 | A review of Davies's pamphlet (fourth and final installment)                    | 2,000 words |
| 9.  | 1847 | Mar. | A separate pamphlet                      | A refutation of Davies's article in <i>Seren Gomer</i> , January 1847           | 12 pages    |
| 10. |      | Aug. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 120-23                 | A refutation of Davies's reworking of his pamphlet                              | 1,900 words |
| 11. |      | Sep. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 134-37                 | Conclusion of no. 10  | 1,750 words |
| 12. |      | Nov. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 171-73                 | Benefits of Davies's persecution  | 1,200 words |
| 13. | 1848 | Feb. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 21-23                  | A supposed dialogue between Davies and his "slugger"                            | 1,200 words |
| 14. |      | Mar. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 45-46                  | Announcement of the baptism of Rees Price, Davies's "right-hand man"            | 250 words   |
| 15. |      | Mar. | <i>Y Drysorfa Gynnulleidfaol</i> , 76-78 | "An observer" defends Mormonism against the attacks of W. R. Davies             | 1,300 words |
| 16. |      | June | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 88-90                  | A satire of Davies's baptizing of apostate Mormons                              | 1,450 words |
| 17. |      | Sep. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 131-33                 | Testimony of Rees Price, W. R. Davies's "right-hand man"                        | 1,000 words |
| 18. |      | Dec. | <i>Prophwyd</i> , 187-88                 | Testimony of Job Rowland, a convert to Mormonism from Davies's congregation     | 300 words   |
| 19. | 1849 | Sep. | <i>Udgorn Seion</i> wrapper, 3           | Announcement of Davies's death  | 30 words    |



that the Baptists “would not come ever again to disturb the camp of the Saints, as they were beneath the notice of every man of common sense.”<sup>6</sup>

Davies further mentions that wherever the Saints went among the Baptists they were met with defeat. But when they went to the “men of the sprinkle” (as Davies called the Independents, because of their mode of baptism), the Mormons finally scored a victory and baptized “an intelligent and gifted young man, a deacon in the Sunday school.” This was probably Abel Evans, who became a powerful missionary for the LDS faith. Evans’s family members were initially opposed to his conversion, but within a few days they also converted. Davies concludes: “Had they been Baptists, they would have won the battle.”<sup>7</sup>

Despite exhaustive searches in *Y Bedyddiwr* and numerous other religious periodicals of that era, I have located no other writings for Davies until two years later in March 1846. Much excitement was caused among the Mormons when they read a supposed challenge (no. 3, table 1) sent to W. R. Davies by two Mormon missionaries, Abel Evans and William Henshaw. The 250-word letter is dated 10 January 1846, and has numerous grammatical and spelling errors in Welsh. It contains this challenge to Davies:

We . . . are sending you this letter to compel you as an honest man to come to the field to defend that which you said previously, to face the public next Thursday night, the fifteenth of this month, and make yourself known to the public. If you come, our celebrated Apostle, Capt. Dan Jones, will be there to face you . . . . Your absence will be proof of your heresy.<sup>8</sup>

In his lengthy response Davies refuses to accept the challenge for the following five reasons:

1. The persons who address me are beneath my consideration.
2. The names that you give yourselves are too low to scorn, such as “the only true church of Jesus Christ,” “our celebrated Apostle Captain D. Jones,” etc.
3. The mad, presumptuous doctrines which you proclaim are beneath the consideration of every man who has common sense.
4. One of your objectives is to have a “fair” in order to gather together foolishness, but chiefly to try to collect money.
5. I completely and decidedly refuse your offer out of true respect for the inspired counsel of God through the mouth of one of his holy apostles, who counseled by saying in 1 Timothy 6:5, “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth . . . from such withdraw thyself.”<sup>9</sup>

Davies recommends to Dan Jones that he go back to being a captain of his fishing boat or whatever he was captain of, and he recommends to William Henshaw that he return to his birthplace in Cornwall and make fools of the Cornishmen. Davies then shows how bad the Mormons were by relating several incidents which he says had transpired in Wales:



the failure of Henshaw's blessing to a woman in labor, the failure of another Mormon who had promised to heal all the children of Dowlais, and the incarceration of a young Mormon lad who had stolen from the shop of his future father-in-law.

In a brief note that precedes the challenge and Davies's answer, the editor of *Y Bedyddiwr* comments:

Because of the impudence of these fiends who erroneously call themselves "Saints," and because of their continual attacks on the believers and the nonbelievers in the mining areas, and due to the fact that they have charmed many of the little children and the unstable, and because of their insult on the heavenly ordinances through their sinful imitation of them, we give space to the following correspondence which took place between them and the Rev. W. R. Davies, Dowlais. We must confess that Mr. Davies's letter to them is quite clumsy, but in view of the inferior knowledge and morals of those whom he addresses, perhaps it would be difficult to do better.<sup>10</sup>

Elders Evans and Henshaw claimed that the letter above their names in the March 1846 *Y Bedyddiwr* was a forgery. They immediately sent a letter of protest to the editor of the periodical and stated: "We testify in soberness and truth in the presence of God and men, that we did not write nor did we cause to be written the aforementioned letter, or any other writing ever to that man."<sup>11</sup> The editor printed their letter in the May 1846 issue of *Y Bedyddiwr* (no. 2, table 2), the only time a Mormon protest was allowed to appear in any of the contemporary religious periodicals. But the editor had the last say in the matter in this note following the letter: "Whether the letter referred to is false or authentic, the writing is very much like the writing of this letter. They are so similar that everyone who saw them decided at once that it was the same hand which wrote the two letters."<sup>12</sup>

W. R. Davies responded to the forgery accusations in the June issue of *Y Bedyddiwr* (no. 6, table 1) claiming that he had witnesses to prove he had received the letter through the mail and stating: "I consider it to be your responsibility as the editor and publisher of a monthly periodical (for the sake of religion and your fellow nation) to publish the tricks of these satanists every now and again."<sup>13</sup>

With the "forged" letter and Davies's response in the March 1846 *Y Bedyddiwr* (no. 3, table 1) was a letter that had appeared in the 9 December 1845 *New York Sun*. The letter is dated 20 November 1845 and is attributed to Emma Smith, the Prophet's wife. It contains her supposed admission that she never really believed in her husband's visions and revelations. Emma Smith had written to James Arlington Bennett, probably the real author of the letter, that it was a forgery, but her disclaimer did not appear in the *New York Sun* until 25 January 1846. Nothing further appears to have been said about the letter, however, by



the opponents of Mormonism in Wales or by the Welsh Mormons themselves. Whether the full story was known by either side in Wales is unclear. It may well have been W. R. Davies who had submitted to *Y Bedyddiwr* the supposed letter of Emma Smith.

Yet another article (no. 4, table 1) that appeared in the March 1846 *Y Bedyddiwr* was a very sarcastic one entitled “A Miracle! A Miracle! At Last!” Using still another pseudonym, “Quick-yn-Dwr” [The literal translation is “quick in the water,” but its meaning is unclear], W. R. Davies heaps ridicule on the Mormons for claiming that miracles had occurred among them in Wales. One specific instance Davies discusses in his article is that of William Hughes, a convert to Mormonism whose leg had been broken at the mine where he worked. The Mormons asserted that Hughes’s leg had been miraculously healed as a result of a blessing given by some of their missionaries, but Davies states that when the doctor went to check on his patient, “To [the doctor’s] surprise some fool had taken off the bandage which he had put [on the leg] the day before. . . . And after being asked, the sufferer confessed the whole thing, and to this day the fool-headed wretch has not gotten better, and he is being supported by the Merthyr parish.”<sup>14</sup>

The number of Mormon converts in Wales by early 1846 had grown to nearly five hundred, most of them in South Wales. The reins of leadership of the Welsh Mormons had been given to Elder Dan Jones, often known as Captain Dan Jones. [Dan Jones, a Mississippi riverboat captain, was the recipient of Joseph Smith’s last prophecy just prior to the Martyrdom when the Prophet told him that he would live through the events of Carthage and return to Wales to fulfill the mission to which he had previously been called.] Dan Jones was outraged at Davies’s attack on the Mormons because of the William Hughes case, especially since Davies had not even taken the trouble to travel the two miles separating Dowlais and Merthyr Tydfil to gain personal knowledge of the situation before sending his letter to *Y Bedyddiwr*. Elder Jones immediately sent his own letter to the editor of the periodical, a letter which contains a detailed testimony from William Hughes himself and affidavits from Mormon and non-Mormon eyewitnesses to the miraculous healing. Jones was further outraged at the editor’s refusal to print the letter. This injustice constituted one of the principal motivating factors in Jones’s establishment of *Prophwyd y Jubili* (Prophet of the Jubilee), the first Welsh Mormon periodical. Volume 1, number 1, of this publication appeared in July 1846, only four months after Davies’s article in *Y Bedyddiwr*. And one of its main contents is a six-page refutation of Davies’s charges (no. 3, table 2). That which the editor of *Y Bedyddiwr* had refused to print is also included. Crying out against the “corrupt depths of humanity” made evident by the Baptist publication, Dan Jones writes: “I confess that we have never before seen a treatise half



as large as this published, especially in a periodical which professes to be religious, but not more than one statement of it was truth, in some corner or another.”<sup>15</sup> Jones invites the reader to count with him Davies’s lies and then presents a series of quotations from Davies’s article, showing the fallacy of each one. He expresses further outrage at Davies in a six-page article in the September *Prophwyd y Jubili* (no. 4, table 2). Among many other observations, Jones points out that Davies proves himself devoid of common sense—after all, Davies had stated that the doctrines of Mormonism were beneath the consideration of every man who had common sense, but then he proceeded to consider them. Jones also has a few comments about the periodical willing to print Davies’s writings: “What, to offer us *Y Bedyddiwr* as true! . . . Is that not the sinkhole into which you have spewed the contents of your foul insides for years, and would you wish us to sully our noses in your stinking liquid? Oh, no!”<sup>16</sup>

March 1846 was a month of considerable activity for the Reverend Davies. In addition to the “forged” letter and his answer to the challenge in *Y Bedyddiwr* and his article on the supposed healing of William Hughes’s broken leg, Davies also published a twenty-page pamphlet (no. 5, table 1) entitled *Y Seintiau Diweddaf. Sylwedd pregeth a dradoddwyd ar y gwyrthiau, er mwyn goleuo y cyffredin, a dangos twyll y creaduriaid a alwant eu hunain yn “Seintiau y Dyddiau Diweddaf”* (The Latter Saints. The substance of a sermon which was delivered on the miracles, in order to enlighten the public and show the deceit of the creatures who call themselves “Latter-day Saints”).

In the foreword to this pamphlet Davies laments that the Welsh, after “withstanding the beast of Rome” and other “false” religions, would lower themselves to believe the “unreasonable rubbish and deceit” of the Latter-day Saints. Making no effort to conceal his chauvinism, he asks, “Is it an ignorant, unlearned and disreputable Englishman from Cornwall . . . together with a few unlearned and disreputable creatures who possess the knowledge and the secret of the heavenly kingdom?” The pamphlet is a combination of two major ingredients: scriptural arguments to show the needlessness of miracles and ad hominem attacks to show that the Latter-day Saints were a bunch of “weakheaded and ignorant dolts.”

William Henshaw, the “disreputable Englishman from Cornwall,” as Davies calls him, had gone to Davies’s home in Dowlais on one occasion shortly after beginning his mission in the Merthyr Tydfil area. Davies mentions the event in his private correspondence of 6 May 1843 but offers further detail in his pamphlet: “The false prophet of Pendarren [sic] called at my home some time ago and began to assert and debate his miracles, etc. [He claimed] that he and his brethren possessed every power which the apostles possessed. I listened attentively for a time, but at last I tired of his arrogance, and I asked him to speak with me in the Welsh language, since the Holy Ghost would teach him an answer



without his having to meditate (Luke 21:14). But instead of speaking in tongues, I received (as I knew I would), ‘I can’t speak Welsh, sir.’”<sup>17</sup> Then Davies sent his daughter to the druggist to buy some poison which he offered to Henshaw so that he could prove the scripture, “If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them” (Mark 16:18). Henshaw’s refusal to drink the poison was proof to Davies that his guest was a false prophet.

In the September issue of *Prophwyd y Jubili* (no. 5, table 2) Dan Jones gives a differing account of the meeting between Henshaw and Davies. According to Jones, Davies had invited Henshaw to his home and had even offered him the opportunity to become his assistant preacher. Henshaw refused the post and the poison that was offered him. Jones devoted over half the twenty-eight pages of the September issue of his periodical to counter Davies’s offensive, and he finished the task with a dozen more pages spread over the October, November and December issues (nos. 6, 7, and 8, table 2).

In November 1846 a third party entered into the Jones–Davies polemic about the Hughes leg-healing incident. In that month *Seren Gomer* (The Star of Gomer), another Baptist periodical, carried an article entitled “Sêl heb wybodaeth” (Zeal without knowledge). Surprisingly, the article is pro-Mormon, a truly unusual phenomenon in the religious periodicals of that time. The writer of the article, known only by his pseudonym “Cethlydd y Don” (Songbird of the Ton), bears witness to the Hughes miracle and says of the opponents of Mormonism: “If they had the . . . Queen’s seal on their girdle, I am certain that they would put the Latter-day Saints through the same experience that Stephen had, and many of their pastors would hold their coats.”<sup>18</sup>

Davies, in a 2,000-word article printed in the January 1847 *Seren Gomer* (no. 7, table 1), denies that the enemies of the Saints had any such inclinations and then proceeds to ridicule “Songbird of the Ton” for claiming that Hughes’s leg had been miraculously healed:

You know perfectly well that some from here and from other places have gone every step to Merthyr just to see the man [William Hughes]; and after going to all the trouble, instead of seeing the man up and around, to their disappointment they found him sick with a large lump on his leg; and if anyone doubts the fact, they can see him in that condition now; at least he was like that for the space of six or seven months after the false prophets laid their hands on him.<sup>19</sup>

Some dates here are important: Hughes received blessings from the Mormon elders on 18 and 21 January 1846. Davies’s estimate of “six or seven months” of illness would have expired in August; his *Seren Gomer* article is dated November 1846 (though not published until January 1847). Consequently, it is curious that he should issue an invitation for all to go to Merthyr Tydfil to see the “still-ailing” Hughes. Curious also is the short poem with which Davies ends his article:



You, Latter-day Saints,  
 I shall follow you forever,  
 If you can work miracles,  
 The same as the apostles of our God;  
 But know this—if not—if deceivers  
 Or men without power in the work,  
 I shan't come one inch to follow you,  
 For your journey will end in hell.  
 You have been heard preaching in Wales;  
 But not one miracle has been seen;  
 According to every indication and sign,  
 Your name will fall in disgrace:  
 The same as to Southcoate and Courtney,  
 And Martha and Mary of the white mantle,  
 Will happen to you, I believe,  
 The "Latter days" will come to an end.<sup>20</sup>

Davies signs his article with a new pseudonym—"Gwcw y Don" (Cuckoo of the Ton).

Dan Jones did not delay in answering all the charges of "Cuckoo" but published a twelve-page pamphlet entitled *Amddiffyniad y Saint yn ngwyneb camgyhuddiadau y rhai a alwant eu hunain yn "Gwcw y Don"* (A defense of the Saints against the false accusations of those who call themselves "Cuckoo of the Ton" [no. 9, table 2]). Jones is at his polemical best in this pamphlet as he combines logic and sarcasm to show Davies's wrong conclusions about the Latter-day Saints. He quotes Davies's comment about Mormon miracles:

And I take this opportunity, as if under oath in the presence of my final Judge, to inform you, together with all the readers of the *Seren*, that to this point not one miracle or anything like a miracle has been worked by them anywhere in Merthyr or its environs.<sup>21</sup>

Jones uses Davies's strange pseudonym as a vehicle to show the fallacy of the foregoing statement:

At first, we thought that it was the little cuckoo that we had in our hands, but then it turned into a profaning magpie; after that we thought perhaps the strange bird was a parrot until it became a rapacious kite; but by following him, lo and behold, he proclaims himself a little god—sufficiently omnipresent and omniscient to fill every place from Merthyr and its environs, at least, night and day! Please forgive us for venturing to doubt a single word of that, for we know that we are criticizing the assertions of one so omniscient; for surely he must be to so assert or to ask "all the readers of the *Seren*" to believe his unique witness as to what is NOT done in so big and populous place; yes, before he would take his oath so sober before his judge (for he admits that even he has a judge despite the heights he has reached; and pity him when he stands before him! We would not want to be in his shoes for the universe) about that which, except for his omnipresence, he is unable to know!<sup>22</sup>



Hardly a month would go by in 1847 without an attack by W. R. Davies or a defense by Dan Jones appearing in print, and the verbal exchanges from the pulpits were doubtless even more frequent.

In the February 1847 issue of *Seren Gomer* a columnist by the pseudonym of “Mathetes” published a 3,000-word review of Davies’s twenty-page pamphlet that had appeared nearly a year earlier (no. 5, table 1). The reviewer comments on a few grammatical errors that would need to be corrected in a second edition of the pamphlet, but he had found no errors in logic or doctrine. Davies, in Mathetes’s estimation, had performed a noteworthy service in warning the Welsh to beware of such a “disgraceful, shameful, and illogical movement” as the Mormons.<sup>23</sup>

Although I have found no extant copy, it appears that there was indeed a second edition of Davies’s pamphlet. The only reference I have found to it is in Dan Jones’s eight-page review of it in *Prophwyd y Jubili* for August and September 1847 (nos. 10 and 11, table 2). Judging from Jones’s comments, the pamphlet was made into some sort of catechism for the young people of the Baptist Sunday schools. In addition to numerous objections, Jones was distraught that Davies continued to stoop to name-calling in place of arguing doctrinal issues.

Davies’s favorite name for the Saints was “Satanists.” And in the September 1847 *Y Tyst* (*The Witness*), an Anglican periodical, Davies carefully explains why the Mormons should be called “Nineteenth-century Satanists” instead of Latter-day Saints (no. 9, table 1). The first reason he gives is that they cast devils out of each other, unlike the Apostles of old. His second reason is that the last (or “latter”) days had not arrived as yet. His third reason is that the Mormons, unlike the early Christians, defend themselves with arms.

Davies signs his article “Tobit ger y Bont,” a pseudonym that he had used three years earlier. His last sentence is this: “I hear them bragging throughout the country that many of the members of the Baptists in Caersalem [Davies’s chapel in Dowlais] have joined with them. I can assure you that this is not true, with the exception of one old lady.”<sup>24</sup>

About this time the Reverend Edward Roberts, a Baptist minister from nearby Rhymni, joined Davies in his crusade against the Mormons. Together they planned to give the “home stoke” (apparently an expression meaning “coup de grace”) to Mormonism.<sup>25</sup> Davies invited Roberts to give a special lecture in this campaign at Caersalem Chapel.

Dan Jones attended the lecture and describes the evening in a letter dated 29 September to Mormon Apostle, Orson Spencer:

The scene was truly picturesque. . . . It was in a Baptist chapel, one of their collegians being the hero. The big seat was crowded with reverends, etc., from far and near, and although they exacted sixpence for admission, yet the chapel was crowded with anxious listeners, who, with opened mouths, eagerly anticipated to hear the funeral sermon of Mormonism. I seated



myself in front, and took notes of his topics, and were you to see the fingers and eyes that evidently marked me as a gone case, you would have thought that I had seven horns, if not as many heads, and every time that the harlequin would strike the pulpit with his paw, and cry "Down with Mormonism!" etc., in the midst of the echo of cheers, I had time and opportunity to inspect nearly all eyes in the place. . . . I had sent one of my placards (publishing that I should reply the following evening . . . ) to the chairman, with a request for him to read it at the close, but he refused to read it, and when one of the Saints asked him, I was replied to in the negative by one of them jumping on top of the seat in front of me, and in front of a seatful of the reverend divines, with his fist in my face, and gnashing his teeth, and in the attitude of sending me to the judgment, apparently, if I said a word.<sup>26</sup>

Davies probably continued to preach vehemently against the Mormons during 1848; however, his anti-Mormon writings dwindled. He sent some material from *The Christian Messenger* which was published in two periodicals in January and February (nos. 12 and 13, table 1) and also published a 1,900-word article in a Congregationalist periodical in June (no. 14, table 1). For their part the Latter-day Saints during 1848 had something to say about the Reverend Davies roughly every other month in *Prophwyd y Jubili*, their own periodical. Certainly the Mormons must have felt triumphant as they reported the baptism of Rees Price, a Baptist Dan Jones called "Davies's right-hand man."<sup>27</sup>

At this point Jones even began to describe how the opposition from Dowlais had benefitted the proselyting efforts of the Saints. Although it would be difficult to determine to what extent there was cause and effect, Mormon convert baptisms in Wales did in fact soar to 1,000 during 1847 and to over 1,500 during 1848. In the December 1848 issue of *Prophwyd y Jubili*, Job Rowland, one of Davies's former members, relates how Davies had helped him gain a testimony of Mormonism:

I was with the Baptists for thirteen years. . . . As soon as the Saints came to these areas our teachers, especially Mr. W. R. Davies, began to persecute them and hate them, saying all manner of evil against them. Mr. Davies said one time in our house that his desire was to do the same with their elders as was done to Joseph Smith, that is to kill them. That, together with many other things prompted me to look into their principles.<sup>28</sup>

William Howells, a lay minister with the Baptists prior to his conversion to Mormonism in 1847, also gave credit to W. R. Davies for helping him to see the light:

I knew hardly anything about the Saints or their religion until the Rev. W. R. Davies came to Aberdare to show their deceit; and to my surprise, the more he pounded his Bible on the pulpit and shouted, "Great fraud, devilish hypocrisy, and miserable darkness of the Satanists of the latter days," the more the principles of the Saints shone, like rays of divine truth, to the point of making me begin to believe that if these men were satanic, that his "satanic majesty" had more of the divine truth of the Bible than did the religion which I professed.<sup>29</sup>



In February 1849 when Elder Dan Jones left Wales with a group of over three hundred Welsh Mormon converts headed for their “Zion” in Salt Lake City, he no doubt felt victorious in his three-year-long battle with W. R. Davies. Davies’s congregation, however, continued to be a sizeable one in spite of a few desertions. His pen fell silent after June 1848, and he died of cholera in September 1849. Others would oppose Mormonism in Wales over the years, but none with quite the same vehemence or constancy as did the Reverend W. R. Davies.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>W. R. Davies to William Jones, 6 May 1843, Cwrtmawr Collection, National Library of Wales. All quotations in this study except one from the *Millennial Star* are translations from Welsh to English. The foregoing and all subsequent translations are mine.

<sup>2</sup>*Y Bedyddiwr* 3 (March 1844): 99.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>4</sup>*Y Bedyddiwr* 3 (April 1844): 123.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>8</sup>*Y Bedyddiwr* 5 (March 1846): 91.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>11</sup>*Y Bedyddiwr* 5 (May 1846): 90.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Y Bedyddiwr* 5 (June 1846): 232.

<sup>14</sup>*Y Bedyddiwr* 5 (March 1846): 112.

<sup>15</sup>*Prophwyd y Jubili* 1 (July 1846): 24.

<sup>16</sup>*Prophwyd y Jubili* 1 (September 1846): 78.

<sup>17</sup>Davies to Jones, 6 May 1843, Cwrtmawr Collection.

<sup>18</sup>*Seren Gomer* 29 (November 1846): 343.

<sup>19</sup>*Seren Gomer* 30 (January 1847): 7.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>21</sup>*Amddiffyniad y Saint* (Merthyr Tydfil: D. Jones, 1847), 9.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.* Capital letters are Jones’s.

<sup>23</sup>*Seren Gomer* 30 (February 1847): 47.

<sup>24</sup>*Y Tyst* 2 (September 1847): 201.

<sup>25</sup>*Seren Gomer* 30 (October 1847): 318.

<sup>26</sup>*Millennial Star* 9 (15 October 1847): 318.

<sup>27</sup>*Prophwyd y Jubili* 3 (March 1848): 45.

<sup>28</sup>*Prophwyd y Jubili* 3 (December 1848): 187.

<sup>29</sup>*Udgorn Seion* 1 (May 1849): 93.



# The Bells of Malvern

## I

Pale light blossoms slowly in the rising mist.  
It is evening and the hedgerows gleam  
Around the undulating green expanse of fields.

Listen—

It is the clear and treble-noted bells of Malvern  
Forming sounds upon the stillness  
Floating out toward the villages and hills,  
Settling deeply in the waiting stones and roses.

Children at the windows pause, and listen.  
In the fields and lanes and houses  
Men and women breathe the air that brims with ringing,  
Filling with this time and generation stitching sound  
That lingers, resonant, within the good, strong blood;  
Nestling even in the bones and sinews  
Of infants forming in the womb.

## II

Listen Brigham, Willard, Wilford—  
You can hear the slenderest echoes  
Softly throbbing in the hearts  
Of those you called away.

—Randall L. Hall



# The Gathering of the Australian Saints in the 1850s

Marjorie Newton

The gathering of the Australian Saints in the 1850s offers a fruitful field for comparison with the work of historians on the emigration of the British Saints in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> While the British Mormon emigration to America must be viewed in context as part of a larger population movement, making it difficult to isolate motives, the Australian Mormon emigration was *against* the larger population movement. The doctrine of the gathering made The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints unique in colonial Australia, as the missionaries recruited converts to help build their Zion in North America and led a miniemigration out of the Australian colonies in a period when the tide was flowing into the country. Although the number of Australian converts was extremely small in comparison with those from Britain, detailed examination of the known Australian converts makes possible a “microcosm” approach which helps illumine the larger picture.

Australia in the 1850s was not a unified nation but a group of British colonies scattered around the perimeter of the island continent—an island the same size as the continental United States. Each colony was governed by British law and peopled overwhelmingly by British settlers. Consequently each had a culture and tradition almost completely British. Mormonism first reached Australia not from America, but from Britain, as a by-product of the mission of the Twelve to England in 1840–41. There were several Mormon immigrants in Australia in the 1840s besides William Barrett and Andrew Anderson, the two best known. Despite their efforts, the Australian mission was not formally opened until the arrival of the first American elders, John Murdock and Charles W. Wandell, on 31 October 1851.<sup>2</sup>

The 1850s saw the greatest success in the Australian Mission in the nineteenth century. Between 1853 and 1859, eight small companies of Saints sailed for California from various ports in New South Wales and Victoria. Although only 452 Saints are known to have emigrated from Australia during the 1850s, they were choice stock—among them

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Marjorie Newton lives in New South Wales. Most of the material in this article is drawn from her University of Sydney master's thesis, “Southern Cross Saints: The Mormon Church in Australia.”



Joseph Ridges, who was to build the original Tabernacle organ, and Charles Stapley, whose great-grandson, Elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Council of the Twelve, was to return to Australia a century later to organize the first stake of the Church in the land where his forebears were converted to the gospel.

The whole question of the effects of the Mormon gathering on the missions of the Church appears to have been misunderstood by many historians who frequently refer to the great weakening it caused in the overseas missions in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> However, the question of whether the gathering weakened the branches of the Australasian or any other mission in the nineteenth century is quite irrelevant. There was never any intention of establishing permanent units of the Church overseas before the beginning of the twentieth century, except perhaps in Polynesia. The gathering was, as most historians recognize, as essential and basic a doctrine as repentance and baptism.<sup>4</sup> Church leaders regarded it as a commandment and duty for all converts.<sup>5</sup> The missionaries were sent with explicit instructions to preach, baptize, and teach their converts to flee out of Babylon to Zion, a place of physical and spiritual safety. Brigham Young made it plain that the commandment also applied to the Australian converts:

On the subject of the gathering, you are aware that the spirit and word to scattered Israel is, "come home to the vallies of the mountains, as fast as circumstances will permit." Of course the Saints in New South Wales, and countries adjacent will wend their way here, at every feasible opportunity.<sup>6</sup>

That the Australian Mission and its branches were never intended to be permanent, growing units of the Church is clear from Brigham Young's instructions to Augustus Farnham, Australian mission president:

You will, however, organize and regulate matters in the most judicious manner for the continuance of the work, but gather out the Saints and bring them with you as far as you shall be able to do so, leaving a sufficient number to continue the work. We find it best to gather out all the Saints as fast as it can be done consistently, *leaving only labouring elders in the field.*<sup>7</sup>

Because of its emphasis on a specific place and a physical city of Zion, the Mormon gathering became open to misinterpretation by the "Gentiles," especially when the practice of polygamy became known. The charge that, from motives of lust, the Mormon missionaries traveled abroad or to the eastern United States recruiting young women for their Utah harems was commonplace, even in Australia. A second—and far more credible—thesis looked at the motives, not of the missionaries, but of the Mormon converts and asserted that they "gathered" with an eye to economic advantage rather than from purely religious motives. This theory is still very much alive, and an examination of the Australian



gathering from this point of view may also throw light on the Mormon gathering as a whole.

British historian Phillip A. M. Taylor has examined in considerable detail the motives of the Mormon emigrants. Taylor lists four theories or explanations of the Mormon gathering.<sup>8</sup> The first, or what Taylor calls the “official” version, is that the Saints were “gathering” rather than simply emigrating, that is, they were being obedient to what they regarded as a commandment from the Lord, and that spiritual or religious motives prevailed. The opposite point of view, which appeared very early, is that people became “converted” to Mormonism in order to take advantage of Mormon immigration assistance and the cheap land available to them in America. A third theory is that there may have been a mixture of motives, but that in any case the Mormon emigration was governed by conditions within the Church in America, including the amount of financial assistance available. A final theory is that, after the initial Mormon emigration, the Mormon converts in America infected friends and relatives at home with the desire to emigrate—the “contagion” theory. As Taylor is quick to recognize, these hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. While admitting that it is impossible to accurately ascertain the motives of the nineteenth-century converts, Taylor obviously feels that strands of all these motives—personal and family, economic, political, and religious—were mingled in most of the Mormon emigrants. Taylor also shows that Mormon immigration propaganda made an economic as well as religious appeal, with leaders often implying and occasionally explicitly stating that European Saints would find better economic conditions in America, while also giving realistic warnings of the hardships that must be endured.

Studies of the surviving Australian branch membership records have shown that, contrary to the popular stereotype, there were actually more male than female converts in Australia in the nineteenth century. As in Britain, the majority of the converts were from the working class, although in Australia, with its greater opportunities for upward social mobility, there were more middle class members than in Britain. Of the working-class component, most were, as in Britain, from the “respectable” working classes, many being tradesmen rather than general laborers. Unlike the mainly urban and native-born converts in the British Mission, the majority of Australian converts before 1869 were from rural areas, and of the adult members in the Australian Mission in the nineteenth century only 24 percent were native born. The greater proportion—almost 70 percent (96 percent for the decade of the 1850s)—had been born in the British Isles and had migrated to Australia. Only two LDS converts have been positively identified as exconvicts.<sup>9</sup>

It is estimated that between 45 and 55 percent of the nineteenth-century Australian converts “gathered,” a somewhat lower percentage



than for Britain if Taylor's estimate of the British numbers is correct, or a similar percentage if the figures estimated by Richard L. Evans and William Mulder are correct.<sup>10</sup> The Australian gathering reached a peak of 62 percent during the decade of the 1850s.

The table below lists the Australian companies that sailed for California in the 1850s. From missionary journals, letters to presiding authorities, arrival notices in the *Deseret News*, etc., we know the numbers in the various companies and the names of most of the emigrants.

TABLE 1

| <u>VESSEL</u>     | <u>SAILED</u> | <u>FROM</u> | <u>NUMBER</u> | <u>KNOWN</u> | <u>UNKNOWN</u> |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| <i>Envelope</i>   | 1853          | Sydney      | 30            | 13           | 17             |
| <i>Julia Ann</i>  | 1854          | Newcastle   | 63            | 39           | 24             |
| <i>Tarquinius</i> | 1855          | Melbourne   | 60            | 58           | 2              |
| <i>Julia Ann</i>  | 1855          | Sydney      | 28            | 27           | 1              |
| <i>Jenny Ford</i> | 1856          | Sydney      | 130           | 20           | 110            |
| <i>Lucas</i>      | 1857          | Sydney      | 69            | 69           | 0              |
| <i>Godfrey</i>    | 1857          | Sydney      | 32            | 0            | 32             |
| <i>Milwaukee</i>  | 1859          | Melbourne   | <u>30</u>     | <u>20</u>    | <u>10</u>      |
|                   |               | TOTALS      | 442           | 246          | 196            |

While figures for the Australian Mormon emigration cannot be superimposed on the graph Phillip A. M. Taylor devised for British emigration, owing to the small numbers, the shape of a separate graph of the Australian emigration shows an extraordinary resemblance to the British graph (see figures 1 and 2 on page seventy-one).

There was no immediate correlation between economic conditions in the various Australian colonies and those in Great Britain in that period. For instance, the Cotton Famine in Lancashire in the early 1860s did not affect employment in Australia in the same period, though there were depressions in New South Wales in 1858 and in the 1860s, largely caused by drought. The Australian graph effectively confirms Taylor's finding that periods of depression in Britain did not uniformly lift the rate of British Mormon emigration to Utah. In other words, the converts were not simply seeking an escape from grinding poverty at home. On the other hand, a comparison of the two graphs does suggest that the same forces were affecting both the British and Australian converts, and the common denominator was the Church in Utah. Taylor speculates about the effect of Church assistance on the peaks and lows of emigration, but Australian lows appear for the same periods, and there was no Church assistance to Australian converts whatsoever after an initial unauthorized attempt in 1854. It seems a logical conclusion that the fluctuations in the migration were caused more by events in Utah than by any other factor. Taylor has accounted for this, and the same factors apply



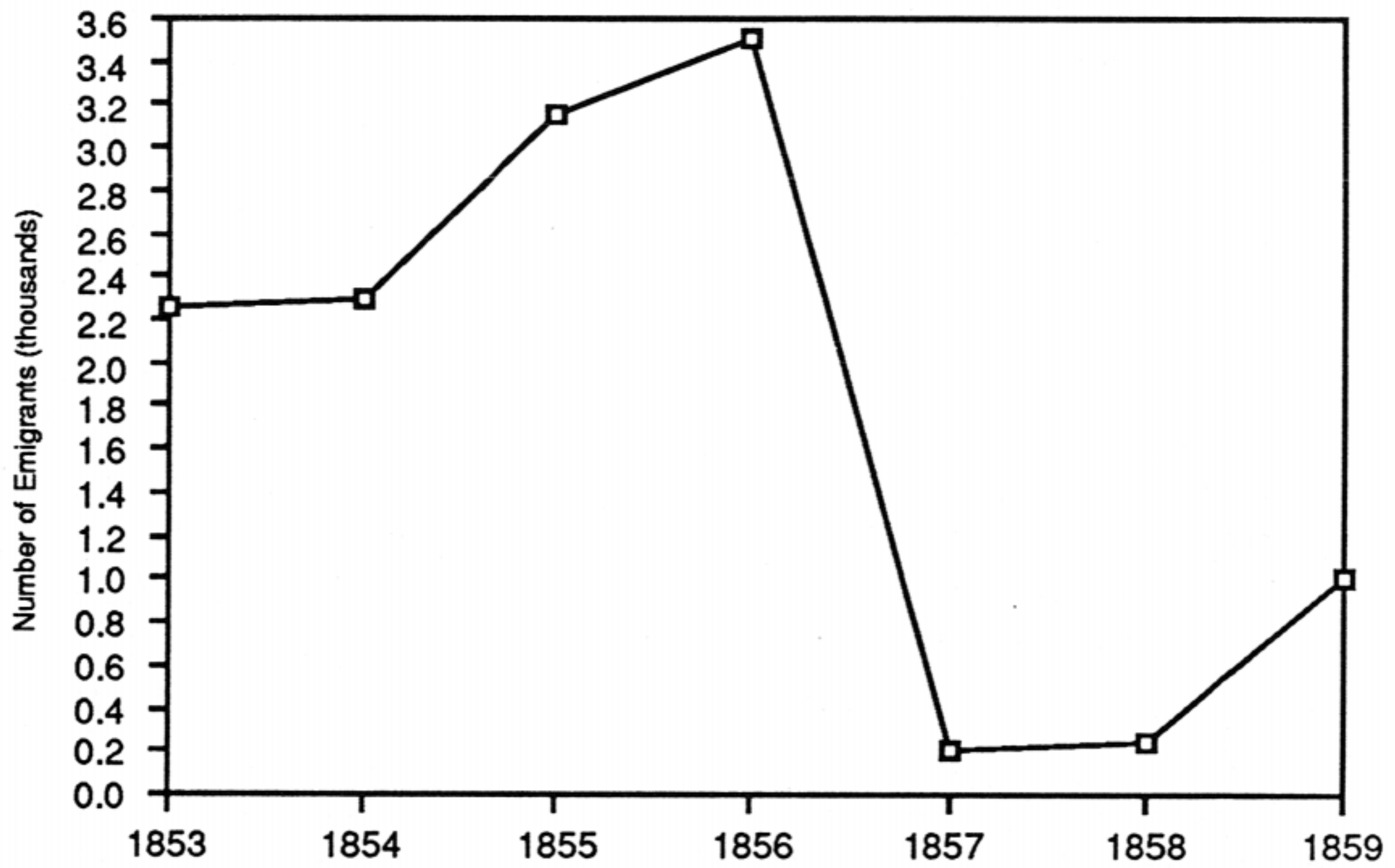


Fig. 1. Mormon emigration from Great Britain, 1853-59

Adapted from Phillip A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965).



Fig. 2. Mormon emigration from Australia, 1853-59



equally well to the Australian situation. The uncertain state of matters in Utah following the "Utah War" and the consequent dearth of missionaries in both Australia and Great Britain were major causes of the reduction in the flow of emigrants.

Taylor has pointed out that many Church leaders urged the economic as well as spiritual rewards the Saints would reap by gathering to Zion. Writing from Australia, Charles Wandell did not scruple to hold out frankly economic inducements to encourage the British Saints to gather directly to America instead of traveling to the Australian goldfields in the hope of getting a "fit-out" for Zion. In a long letter to the *Millennial Star*, he pointed out that while labor was better paid in Australia than in England, it was not so well paid in Australia as in America. Above all, he wrote, "America gives away her lands for the merest trifle, here the Government monopolizes the land for speculative purposes."<sup>11</sup>

There is no trace of economic inducement to gather in the teachings of the other early missionaries to the Australian converts. Augustus Farnham preached repeatedly on the gathering. His sermons stress the need for obedience to the counsel of the First Presidency and the imminence of terrible judgments on the Australian colonies and the consequent wisdom of removing to Zion as soon as possible.<sup>12</sup> His counselor, William Hyde, echoes Farnham, adding to the reasons for emigrating the necessity of receiving the temple ordinances.<sup>13</sup> Farnham also speaks of the need to gather to attend the temple: "We would again entreat the Saints to use every possible effort in their power to flee the confines of Babylon. . . . For if ye gather not with the Saints and are not administered to in the holy ordinances of the House of God . . . you cannot attain unto that blessing, honour, glory and exaltation that awaits such as are thus privileged."<sup>14</sup>

As in England, gathering entailed considerable financial hardship for most of the Australian Saints. The voyage from Sydney or Melbourne to San Francisco or San Pedro was much longer and more expensive than from Liverpool to New York or New Orleans, and fares for Australian Saints were correspondingly higher. For the first (1854) voyage of the *Julia Ann*, the adult fare was twenty-four pounds sterling.<sup>15</sup> Two years later, passage on the *Jenny Ford* cost the Australian Saints twenty-three pounds, ten shillings, for steerage or thirty-five pounds in the cabin.<sup>16</sup>

On a purely mathematical calculation, the fares from Sydney to California would total approximately 102 pounds for Taylor's average family. To this must be added the cost of a wagon and team and supplies for the journey across the Sierra Nevada and the desert to Utah. Thus the total cost from Sydney to Salt Lake City for an average family in the mid-1850s would have been at the very least three times the cost for the average British family, which Taylor calculates at about sixty pounds.<sup>17</sup>



Wages in Australia were, of course, much higher than in Great Britain, but they were not three times higher. Mormon convert John Perkins, for example, earned two pounds, five shillings per week as a storeman in Sydney in 1854.<sup>18</sup> While wages had risen during the early years of the gold rushes, prices and rent rose also, so that saving money in Australia was no easier because of the higher wages. In addition, by mid-1854 a recession had led to an average cut of one-third in the wages of masons and other building workers, at the very period when Mormon emigration was at its peak in Australia.<sup>19</sup>

The problem of the poverty of the Saints was not confined to Britain, and it soon became obvious to the missionaries in Australia that many would need assistance before they could emigrate. Charles Wandell talked of establishing the Perpetual Emigrating Fund in Australia, but little came of it. At his departure in April 1853, he donated about thirty pounds' worth of books to be sold and the proceeds applied to the PEF, but only one person on the *Envelope* appears to have received assistance.<sup>20</sup>

Early in April 1854, the Ninth General Epistle of the First Presidency was received in Sydney.<sup>21</sup> "Let books be opened, and donations received by the Presidents of all the various missions of the Latter-day Saints upon the whole earth, to help the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, and the Saints come home," wrote the Presidency. President Farnham (apparently mistakenly) took this as authority to announce to the annual conference in Sydney in April 1854 that books for the PEF would be opened at his office "for the purpose of receiving donations to the said Fund."<sup>22</sup> Although this announcement was not made until two weeks after Hyde's company sailed on the *Julia Ann*, Farnham apparently already had the scheme functioning in some form before they left and had paid 240 pounds towards the passage of the poorer Saints.<sup>23</sup> As Hyde recorded that the charter fee for the vessel was 425 pounds, it appears that somewhat over half the first *Julia Ann* company received assistance.

The First Presidency was concerned when reports of President Farnham's actions reached them. They were convinced that economic conditions in Australia were so good that Church assistance for gathering was unnecessary, and Farnham was mildly rebuked for his initiative.<sup>24</sup> There is no record that Farnham argued the case for assistance for the Australian Saints with any of the authorities in Salt Lake City. But with or without the assistance of the PEF, the Australian Saints still had to gather. "We are determined to the utmost of our power to push the Saints to Zion," he wrote.<sup>25</sup> Through the columns of the mission paper, *Zion's Watchman*, he counseled the Saints in his extensive mission:



Lay aside every degree of extravagance. Let your wants be few and simple, and only such as are necessary; let everything be managed with economy and prudence, laying aside all you can for gathering; if you are faithful and diligent in doing your part the Lord will do His, and you will be gathered.<sup>26</sup>

Some of the Saints paid their fares by installments, handing over small amounts to Farnham until the required sum was reached.<sup>27</sup> Others from Sydney and Melbourne made their way to the goldfields, hoping to raise the needed funds on the diggings. Although the Church leaders, both in America and Australia, officially frowned on this procedure, Farnham visited the Victoria goldfields and counseled the men of the Castlemaine Branch to organize themselves into a company to consolidate their mining efforts. This was done, and an elaborate set of rules and bylaws was drawn up.<sup>28</sup> Although some dropped out, several members of the company reached their financial goal and sailed for Zion. Farnham also continued an unofficial assistance scheme, begging the more well-to-do members to help the poorer, with mixed success.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that the missionaries after Wandell (who, after all, was writing to the *British* Saints) did not hold out economic inducements to persuade the Australian Saints to gather probably reflects the better economic position of the Australian Saints relative to the English Saints but in no way minimizes the expense of the journey. If most were already better off than they were in England, and upwardly mobile, there would have been little point in trying to convince them that life in a raw frontier environment in Utah would offer them more earthly comforts and success than they now had. It seems more than likely that the great majority of the Australian Saints did genuinely gather because they felt it was a commandment and because they desired to be with the body of the Church, rather than for personal betterment.

Even so, it would have been a considerable sacrifice. It must be remembered that, for almost all the Australian Saints, gathering to Zion involved a *second* emigration. Those who gathered in the 1850s had been in Australia for periods varying from two years (for example, the Ridges and Syphus families) to twenty years (as the Stapleys and Bryants in the Hunter River Valley) at the time of their second emigration. The cost of this double emigration would certainly have offset any benefits to be obtained from the cheaper land in America.

While the double emigration must have caused even more financial setback than the gathering entailed for the English Saints, it is possible that mentally and psychologically "gathering" may have been easier for the Australian Saints. Most had left family and lifetime friends in Britain, and many, particularly the fairly recent immigrants, would not yet have had deep roots in Australia.

The Australian companies were organized along similar lines to the British ones. Special conferences were called for the departing Saints



and a president and two counselors appointed for the company. In some cases the president was a returning missionary (as William Hyde on the first voyage of the *Julia Ann*) and at other times a local member, even when there were returning American elders on board. For example, John Penfold, from the Hunter region, was president of the second *Julia Ann* company despite the presence of American missionaries James Graham and John Eldredge on board. Schoolteachers were appointed for the children and school conducted each weekday. On the *Jenny Ford*, Joseph Ridges was appointed choirmaster and conducted singing practices regularly. On all voyages, the Saints assembled night and morning to pray and sing hymns, and regular Sunday services were held, with prayer meetings and testimony meetings on weeknights.

As in Britain, tributes were paid to the organization and discipline of the Mormon companies. Captain Davis and the owner, Mr. B. F. Pond, who sailed with the first *Julia Ann* company, each certified that "they never saw business more correctly and expeditiously transacted, than was the business of that company." They also stated that they "never saw a company that were so easy to be governed by the voice of one man as that company of Saints were." Pond wrote to President Farnham from San Francisco that he would be pleased to charter the ship for further companies.<sup>30</sup>

The only deaths recorded during the emigration of the Australian Saints were those of Esther Allan, age forty-one, who died on the first voyage of the *Julia Ann* from complications following childbirth, and the infant child of James and Ann Humphries of the *Tarquinia* company. As well, two women and three children were lost in the wreck of the *Julia Ann* in 1855.

During the 1850s, few of the Australian Saints traveled directly to Utah after arriving in California. Most managed to accumulate only the fare from Australia to the west coast of America and once there had to begin again to save for the remainder of the journey. Many of the Australian Saints remained in San Bernardino for considerable periods. James and Mary Ann Warby and their children, for instance, who traveled on the first voyage of the *Julia Ann*, stayed in San Bernardino for two years before finally completing the journey to Utah.<sup>31</sup> Others worked in San Francisco or other parts of California to earn the money for the second leg of the journey. The Nye family, who arrived on the *Milwaukie* in 1859, spent three months in San Francisco before moving to Stockton, where the four elder sons of the family worked on Comstock's ranch for more than a year until they could buy a four-horse team and wagon, eventually arriving in the Salt Lake Valley some twenty-two months after leaving Melbourne.<sup>32</sup> James Humphries, from Adelaide, spent eight months in Hawaii after the *Tarquinia* was



condemned before saving enough to travel on to California, where he worked in various places, including San Bernardino, until he eventually reached Salt Lake City three years and eight months after leaving Adelaide.<sup>33</sup> Henry and Elizabeth Gale took almost five years to get from San Bernardino to Utah.<sup>34</sup>

The largest company of Australian Saints, numbering 121, sailed on the *Jenny Ford* in May 1856. Although several smaller companies left over the next ten or fifteen years, by the mid-1870s the practice of forming companies had been discontinued, and individual Australian families made their own arrangements to travel to Zion.<sup>35</sup> From about 1890, the First Presidency began to look at the prospects of establishing a worldwide church, with permanent overseas missions and branches. Missionaries were urged to encourage their converts to remain in their native lands and build up the Church there.

So the Mormon “gathering” ended, but the problem of the motivation of the nineteenth-century emigrating Saints remains. As previously stated, emigration from Australia to America was against general population movements. During the 1850s, the population of Australia as a whole trebled; the population of one colony, Victoria, increased sevenfold during this decade. The only comparable movement in the whole history of Australia was a brief exodus during the California gold rush of 1849.<sup>36</sup> The financial burden of the Australian gathering has been outlined above, as well as the recognition by the mission presidents that economic inducements were not applicable to the Australian Saints in the 1850s and 1860s. It seems an inescapable conclusion that the Australian Saints, at least, gathered for religious reasons. Certainly surviving contemporary statements stress the religious motivation and lend strength to Mulder’s assertion that soon after baptism Mormon converts experienced a “baptism of desire” as the spirit of gathering touched them.<sup>37</sup> So it was in Australia. A letter written to her mother by mother-of-six Martha Humphreys, baptized while living on the Allyn River in the 1850s, epitomizes the attitudes of the Australian converts:

and now my dear Mother, I will answer that question you put me, of when, are we going. . . . We leave Australia with all its woes, and bitterness, for the Land of Zion next April . . . perhaps you will say, I am building on worldly hopes, that never will be realized, not so, Mother . . . knowing what I know, I tell you, if I knew for a positive certainty, that when we get there, persecutions, such as have been the portion of the saints before, awaited us, I would still insist upon going, what are a few short years in this present State, compared with Life Eternal. . . .

Would, Mother, that a daughter’s prayers could persuade you to take the Same Step as I have done . . . to-morrow week will be a month since I obeyed the Saviour’s command and truly, most truly, can I say my life is entirely changed, I may compare my past life, to a wilderness of weeds with hardly a flower strewed among them now how different, the weeds have vanished, and flowers Spring up in their place. Mother,



why cannot you take the same Step. I tell you, Mormonism is truth, and the only truth. . . .

I should like Mother before we leave this Colony, to See you, better than words can express . . . my little girls often tell me they ought to See their Grandmother before they go away . . . my girls have reckoned how long it is to April, they want to go to Zion nearly as much as I do. I do not know how we shall get ready in the time, nor whether we will be able to get enough clothing, but so as we get enough to pay our passage that is all I care for, for clothes we must do the best we can, and when we get there my Husband and big boys can work. . . .

. . . believe me, my dear Mother,  
Your affectionate daughter,  
Martha Maria Humphreys.<sup>38</sup>

Martha Maria Humphreys never reached Zion as she so dearly desired to do. She and her nine-year-old daughter Mary were drowned in the wreck of the *Julia Ann* two hundred miles west of Tahiti on 3 October 1855. "It is perfectly possible—even if the conclusion is distasteful to many moderns—that more than a few rose above the purely material conditions of their day," concluded Phillip A. M. Taylor.<sup>39</sup> The evidence of the Australian gathering confirms that the British Mormon gathering was something more than an economic movement.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Phillip A. M. Taylor, "Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 22 (July 1954): 249–70; Phillip A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965); and Malcolm R. Thorp, "Social and Religious Origins of Early English Mormons" (Paper delivered at the World Conference on Records, Salt Lake City, 12–15 August 1980).

<sup>2</sup>The date usually quoted, 30 October 1851, is incorrect. Murdock failed to allow for the effects of the International Date Line when making daily entries in his journal.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Pamphleteering" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1982), 239; Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 139–40; and R. Lanier Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986), 202, 204, 257.

<sup>4</sup>William Mulder, "Mormonism's 'Gathering': An American Doctrine with a Difference," *Church History* 23 (September 1954): 248–64.

<sup>5</sup>See the "Seventh General Epistle of the First Presidency," *Millennial Star* 14 (17 July 1852): 325; and "First Epistle of Orson Pratt," *Zion's Watchman*, 3 August 1854, 90.

<sup>6</sup>Brigham Young to Augustus Farnham, 31 October 1853, in *Zion's Watchman*, 6 May 1854, 90.

<sup>7</sup>Brigham Young to Augustus Farnham, 31 January 1855, Manuscript History of the Australian Mission, Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives), emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup>Taylor, "Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?" 249–70; and Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 151–53.

<sup>9</sup>Marjorie Newton, "The Converts," chap. 5 of "Southern Cross Saints: The Mormon Church in Australia" (Master's thesis in progress, University of Sydney).

<sup>10</sup>Taylor, "Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?" 245; Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 144; Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain: A Brief Summary of the Activities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the United Kingdom, with Emphasis on Its Introduction One Hundred Years Ago* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1937), Appendix; Mulder, "Mormonism's 'Gathering,'" 163 n. 44.

<sup>11</sup>"A Chapter on Gold Digging," *Millennial Star* 15 (30 April 1853): 277–81; and *Millennial Star* 15 (7 May 1853): 293.



- <sup>12</sup>See, for example, *Zion's Watchman*, 4 March 1854, 86; and *Zion's Watchman*, 11 October 1854, 154.
- <sup>13</sup>*Zion's Watchman*, 4 March 1854, 73.
- <sup>14</sup>"Second Epistle of the Presidency of the Australasian Mission," *Zion's Watchman*, 18 June 1855, 36.
- <sup>15</sup>William Hyde, Journal, 15 February 1854, LDS Church Archives.
- <sup>16</sup>Josiah Flemming, Journal, 23 April 1856, Manuscript History of the Australian Mission, LDS Church Archives.
- <sup>17</sup>Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 123.
- <sup>18</sup>John Perkins, Diary, 4 January 1854, LDS Church Archives.
- <sup>19</sup>Bryce Fraser, ed., *The Macquarie Book of Events* (Sydney: Macquarie Library, 1984), 232.
- <sup>20</sup>Minutes of Annual Conference held in Sydney, 23, 25, and 27 March 1853, Manuscript History of the Australian Mission, LDS Church Archives.
- <sup>21</sup>*Zion's Watchman*, 17 December 1853, 55.
- <sup>22</sup>*Zion's Watchman*, 6 May 1854, 93.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup>Brigham Young to Augustus Farnham, 19 August 1854, in *Zion's Watchman*, 15 February 1855, 217.
- <sup>25</sup>*Zion's Watchman*, 4 March 1854, 86.
- <sup>26</sup>*Zion's Watchman*, 14 October 1854, 154.
- <sup>27</sup>John Perkins, Diary, 19 August 1854, LDS Church Archives.
- <sup>28</sup>Alonzo Colton, Journal, 16 October 1854, LDS Church Archives.
- <sup>29</sup>Farnham, Journal, 4, 8, and 18 May 1856, LDS Church Archives.
- <sup>30</sup>*Zion's Watchman*, 14 October 1854, 158.
- <sup>31</sup>Sarah Warby Boren, *Family History of James and Mary Warby* (N.p.: Privately printed, 1958), 7.
- <sup>32</sup>Family Record of Ephraim Hesmer Nye, MS, Western History Collection, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo.
- <sup>33</sup>"Autobiography of James Humphreys," in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1959–77), 9:454–57.
- <sup>34</sup>Mae Gale Wilkins McGrath, *The Ancestors and Descendants of James Gale* (N.p.: Privately printed, 1957), 30.
- <sup>35</sup>*Millennial Star* 36 (28 September 1874): 620.
- <sup>36</sup>Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1983), 139.
- <sup>37</sup>Mulder, "Mormonism's 'Gathering,'" 250.
- <sup>38</sup>Martha Maria Humphreys to her mother, 8 December 1853, Manuscript Collection, Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia. The letter is incorrectly catalogued under the date of 8 December 1857. Quoted by permission of the Mitchell Library.
- <sup>39</sup>Taylor, "Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?" 270.



# A Modern Acts of the Apostles, 1840: Mormon Literature in the Making

Eugene England

Literature has a powerful and perennial hold on human attention and a central place in human life. We value it, I believe, because it gives unusually moving and memorable expression to our most significant experiences, including experiences in the mind. And we value most those expressions in language which most fully combine effective form and important content: we value significant events and feelings and ideas that are significantly expressed, that is, expressed so as to affect our feelings, including our moral response to those important events, feelings, and ideas.

Among both writers and critics, one of our most admired and continually influential works of literature is the Bible. People from all nations and ways of life—people of all degrees of education and wealth and social class—have loved it and had their lives transformed by it. The Bible is one of a rather small group of books appreciated by both the literary establishment and the common people. Some of the most appreciated parts of the Bible have been the acts and letters of the Apostles, which give us the crucial story, movingly expressed, of the remarkable adventures and teachings of those who established the foundations of Christianity and thus profoundly influenced the ideas, the feelings—the lives—of a large portion of the people on earth who lived after them.

In 1839–40 eight modern Apostles, claiming the same authority and purpose as Peter, Paul, James, and John, embarked on a mission to carry the restored gospel of Jesus Christ across the sea to the most advanced and powerful nation in the Western world—much as the ancient Apostles had done in their journeys to Greece and Rome. And the modern Apostles, like the ancient, gave sermons and wrote diaries and letters. In other words, they produced literature. I believe it is good literature; and though, as with the ancient texts, it will take some time before that literature is collected and its chaff winnowed away and the rest properly appreciated, I believe that literature will eventually stand as



a modern Acts of the Apostles—a valued part of Mormon literature that will be increasingly valuable to the world.

The process of selection and evaluation has begun, but so far mainly historians have taken up the task. Ronald Esplin, Scott Kenney, Elden Watson, Ronald Walker, and others have published some letters and diaries, while James Allen, Malcolm Thorp, Thomas Alexander, Richard Jensen, and others have helped us understand the cultural and historical context for understanding and appreciating this literature. Under Allen's leadership, a volume of the writings is now being prepared as part of the activities of the sesquicentennial celebration of the first modern apostolic journey to England in 1837. It is time to begin to appreciate these writings critically.

I will concentrate here on the letters and diaries of four of the Apostles who went on the second apostolic journey to England, literature written mainly in 1840. I have chosen passages that give some idea of the quality that occurs in writers of a great variety of skills and educational backgrounds, who use a minimal variety of genres—formal and informal letters, daily-kept diaries, reflective reminiscences, and remembered sermons. I will need to try to develop some critical principles in the process, because we still are handicapped for want of language and theory to deal with literature other than belles lettres. We generally know what makes a short story or poem good, but what about a letter or sermon that moves us? Can we say why? Is it the form or the content? Our usual categories of form—texture, cohesion of imagery, mythic and symbolic power, subtlety of point of view—do not seem to apply, and the content has an unusual relation to reality compared to the purely imaginative, fictive modes. Does the account of a death, or a courageous decision, or a visitation of angels affect us differently, seem even more powerful though less “beautifully” expressed, than a play or poem, because it is represented as actually happening to a fellow human being, perhaps one of our ancestors? And is that difference simply sentimentality, which we have all learned to despise? Perhaps some examples can help us approach these difficult and important questions.

The first apostolic mission was a remarkable success, producing approximately fifteen hundred converts in less than a year. But after Elders Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde returned to America, there was not much developing vitality and, by conscious design, no emigration. With suprising audacity, Joseph Smith had sent those two Apostles during a time of trouble in Kirtland when common sense would have suggested keeping his strongest supporters close. But again in 1839, just after the Church had been forcibly expelled from Missouri and was lying exhausted on the malarial banks of the Mississippi, Joseph, in what must have looked like folly, sent his closest and strongest leaders to England. I believe he did so because of his prophetic expectation of a transfusion



of British blood, an inpouring of people with faith and skills that would save the Church and send it on its way to build a kingdom in the West.

The mission did not begin well. In early August, John Taylor departed, leaving his wife, Leonora, and three small children in a derelict log cabin that was part of old Fort Des Moines in Montrose, across the Mississippi from the future Nauvoo. He and Wilford Woodruff were the only Apostles able to start on time. Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball were still too ill to walk when they left a month later, just a few days after Leonora wrote to John on 9 September. I include part of her letter because of its qualities (especially its detailed directness of emotion and fearless honesty) and the reminder it provides that the Apostles were matched by great and articulate women in the eternal partnerships that were their marriages:

This has been a distressed place since you left, with Sickness. Allmost evry individual in evry Family sick; . . . My poor little Joseph has had chills and fever twice; this is his well day. Sister Orson Prat[']s Baby is dead. She died on Sunday. The day following we were expecting Joseph would die but the Lord spard my dear Child in answer to Prayer. Mary Anne is well and I keep upon my Feet grunting about. . . .

Brother [Brigham] Young Family are all sick, him and all. The[y] could not get a drop of watter. I feched them several Pails. Brother [Alanson] Ripley and I were there the other day [and] Brother Young said it was a Greivous imposition that the[y] could not have the Room I was in. I made answer I did not know where to go. I did not like to intrude upon a Family and I was tired of it. He said he would lie in the Street if he was me before a Family should be situated as theres was, that Mrs. Young was Sick. The first I heard of it, I imediatey got a strange Man that was here to move my things into Sister [Sarah] Prats Room where I now am. . . .

Pray write soon and often to me My Dear John. I never needed more grace, patience or your prayers than I do at present. . . . I am waitting for Brother W. Smith . . . to make his House more comfortable and then I shall move there until my place is prepared, if I get anny. If I dont Sister Woodruff says I shall live with her, I believe her House is not up. If I do we can croak together. I do feel thankfull to the Lord my health is as good as it is. . . .

I walked below Mr. Bissels to Night, looking for the Cow where you used to go with me and felt that I was alone. But if we suffer to promote the cause of our Blessed Lord it will end in J[oy] which no Man taketh from us. We are seperated for a short time but I hope we shall yet meet to part no more for ever.

Dear little Joseph saw Brother [Abraham?] Smoot on Sunday and thought it was you. He Jumpt of[f] my knee, ran to him, and clung to his Legs with so much delight you would have pittty'd the dear Lamb. . . . I found rest, comfort and delight in Praying with my dear little ones before we left our house, but now that is over for the pressent. Brother Ripley is very kind and says I shall have a house but he cannot make one and it is hard to get one. I spoke to him about what B. Young said. He told me he dreaded it worse than death his speaking to me but I must not mind it, he was sick and fretful. I tell evry one I left the Room on account of Sister Young's confinement that speaks of it. I leave him to settle that business with my Father who has promised to take care of me and mine.<sup>1</sup>



As Ronald K. Esplin has noted, about three weeks later, still without hearing from her husband, Leonora turned the letter sideways and wrote an addition at right angles across the original letter, including the following:

My darling Joseph has been at the point of Death, he has had Fever and Bowel complaint and brought so low that I did not hear the sound of his voice for four days. Yesterday his Fever left him. He is better to day but very sick. Still no one expected he could live. Bless the Lord I begin to hope he may be spard. I have not had my Clothes of[f] for five nights. I have watcht by him alone all the time. I cannot tell the sorrow of my Heart at the thoughts of loseing my sweet Child.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, Elder Taylor had become extremely sick on the journey across Indiana, so ill his companions had to leave him at a tavern, where after three weeks he wrote Leonora on 19 September, detailing his attempts to travel while violently ill and his eventual succumbing to rest and a doctor's care. He concludes:

I have got clear of my fever and am fast recovering—i[t] brought me however to the gates of death several times. It laid hold of me like a strong man armed and I was led to quail beneath the power of the adversary for I believe his hand was in it—You may ask me how I am going to prosecute my journey, with my trunk a distance of 300 miles or upwards by land, without means. I do not know, but one thing I do know, that there is a being who clothes the lillies of the valley and feeds the ravens and he has given me to understand that all these things shall be added and that is all I want to know. He laid me on a bed of sickness and I was satisfied. He has raised me from it again and I am thankful. He stopped me on my road and I am content. When my way is open to proceed I shall go on my way rejoicing. If he took me I felt that it would be well. He has spared me and it is better. The Lord does all things well. Bless his holy name Oh my soul and forget not all his mercies.<sup>3</sup>

These letters, between two people deeply in love with each other, and deeply devoted to their children and their faith, reveal the most basic and important human qualities—not always, though sometimes, in the most elegant language, but always with moving honesty, humor, and clear-sighted vision and fresh expression. And those, I believe, are the universal qualities of good literature.

John Taylor recovered enough to proceed to Kirtland, where Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball caught up with him. Brother Brigham, who was apparently not told how much he had offended Leonora, records in his journal that the Brethren met in the temple:

Brother Kimball opened the meeting by prayer; I then annointed brother Taylor with pure sweet oil, and pronounced such blessings as the Spirit gave utterance. Brother Taylor then arose and prayed for himself. Brother Turley, one of the Seventies, was annointed by D. S. Miles, one of the Presidents of Seventies which was sealed by loud shouts of hosanna; then their feet were washed and the meeting closed.<sup>4</sup>



Brigham Young's growing self-confidence as an apostolic leader, though still mixed with his sense of his roughness as a divine instrument and his need for further polishing, is revealed in another entry from his journal as the group proceeded across Lake Erie toward New York:

The lake was so rough that no boat came into port until the 26th, when we went on board the steamboat Columbus. . . . The wind rose about one o'clock in the morning. I went upon deck and felt impressed in spirit to pray to the Father, in the name of Jesus, for a forgiveness of sins, and then I felt to command the winds to cease, and let us go safe on our journey. The winds abated, and I felt to give the glory and honor and praise to that God who rules all things.<sup>5</sup>

In New York the Apostles pooled their resources so that some could go on while Elders Young and Kimball stayed for a while to raise money for their passage. Elders Taylor and Woodruff arrived in Liverpool in early January, met with the mission presidency in Preston, then immediately separated to begin their ministries—Elder Woodruff going into the Potteries, an area of central England, and Elder Taylor returning to Liverpool with Joseph Fielding. John Taylor was thirty-one, a native Englishman and former Methodist preacher, with a direct spiritual and emotional clarity and power similar to the other Apostles, but gifted (as the letter I have quoted indicates) with a rather urbane articulateness. Except for a few months' teaching in Ireland and on his wife's native Isle of Man, he spent 1840 in Liverpool, building a strong body of Saints and a support system for what became the center for Mormon emigration and printing and eventually the administration of the British Mission.

In a letter to Leonora on 30 January 1840, in which he copied part of his diary and reported on his impressions of English life in the great Victorian industrial city of Liverpool, Elder Taylor also reveals the nature and quality of his preaching and the response the Apostles were beginning to receive. As he visited the Saints still remaining from the 1837 mission, he says he was "much pleased and edified at the kindness and love manifested by the brethren and sisters and with their simple unadorned manner." But he also writes of his

peculiar feeling at seeing [a member's] wife after dinner leave the house her husband (a shoemaker) and children to work in a factory (a practice very prevalent in this and other manufacturing towns) thus breaking up those social endearments that unite the family. It makes my heart bleed to see these things. When will the earth cease to mourn.<sup>6</sup>

On Sunday, 26 January, Elder Taylor had gone with Joseph Fielding to a chapel of "Aitkenites," where Fielding's brother-in-law was the preacher. But that relative was away, and so instead they "heard a young man preach who seemed very devoted, lamented over the state



of the professing Church, prayed for the blessing of the Holy Ghost and looked for the coming Kingdom of Christ.” These were obviously what were called “seekers,” dissenters from the official Anglican church, or in turn from one of the dissenting groups, who had turned back to the New Testament and to basic, primitive Christian beliefs and practices and hopes—and who thus were remarkably well prepared to receive the restored gospel. Elder Taylor felt a great desire to share “the glorious things of the Gospel” in response to the young man’s expressed hope and asked if he could address a group of this sect’s class leaders and preachers after the service. Following is his sermon as he later remembered it:

Gentlemen friends & bretheren—I have listened with deep interest to the things that I have heard this morning. I have observed with peculiar emotions the deep anxiety the fervent prayer and the strong solicitude that is manifested by you for the obtaining of the Gift of the Holy Ghost. I have been pleased with the correct views that you entertain in regard to the situation of the Church & of the World & as you believe in baptism & laying on of hands . . . —so do we—Bretheren & friends we are humble followers of Jesus Christ & are from America. I have lately arrived in this place have come a distance of 2000 miles without purse or scrip and testify to you bretheren that the Lord has revealed himself from Heaven & put us in possession of those things that you are so anxiously looking for & praying that you may receive (Glory to God was shouted by many present & great emotion manifested) that thing has taken place which is spoken of by John in the revelations & I saw another angel flying in the midst of Heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach &c. Reve. 14. This gospel has got to be proclaimed to every nation kindred people & tongue & we the Servants of God are come to this City to warn the inhabitants of their approaching danger & to call upon them to repent & be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins & they shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost.— Brethern & Friends I feel an anxious desire to deliver this testimony—I feel the word of the Lord like fire in my bones & am desirous to have an oppertunity of proclaiming to you these blessings that you are looking for—that you may rejoice with us in those great & glorious things which God has revealed for the salvation of the world in these last days & if it would be consistent with your feeling I should be glad of an oppertunity of speaking in your Chapel this afternoon next week or any time when it would be convenient for you—Many present rejoiced, others wept, some were jealous & angry.<sup>7</sup>

Elder Taylor then added this fascinating report to Leonora of the speech he arranged to give the next Sunday to a congregation of three hundred:

I preached from Jude upon the faith that was once delivered to the Saints. I spoke upon the desire that had been manifested by men in different ages to reform—that Luther, Malancthon, Calvin, Wesley, Whitfield & others since them had tried to bring about the ancient order of things & that however laudible their attempt might have been they had failed—that there was neither love, unity, power, nor any blessings now in existence that



existed among the Ancient Saints that many had it in their hearts to pray for the ancient order & wished they had ancient Methodism Presbyterianism &c., but we would now see what kind of Gospel that Ancient Saints had & be governed by it. —I then shewed what the gospel was as presented by Peter, Paul, Phillip &c. —began the day of Pentecost &c. spoke of the Order, Spirit, Doctrine, Ordinances, Gifts, Blessings &c. of the gospel and shewed that if it was true then, it was the privilege to enjoy these things. It was ours now to possess as great blessings through the same gospel—that as many of them had been praying for the ancient faith the Lord had answered their prayers & sent us his servants to testify to them that God had restored these things— . . . that the Lord had sent us to baptize and called upon them to repent & be baptized they may make it known to us after the congregation was dismissed. There was great emotion in the meeting, many wept, others rejoiced & praised the Lord. The spirit of the Lord indeed was with us & bore testimony to what we said & I plainly saw that it was the power of God & not the wisdom of man—that I could do nothing unless the spirit of God bore testimony to that word. After meeting a young man came to me and told me that the Lord had showed these things to him in a vision. He rejoiced & said that he would be baptized. A young woman came to me & wept & said that she knew it was the truth, the power of God & the word of God.— Several said that they believe we were Servants of God & wanted to obey the Gospel.<sup>8</sup>

As Elder Taylor reminded this group, many across England were looking for the ancient order of things, even an “ancient Methodism Presbyterianism &c.” The Apostles had their most remarkable success in 1840 among a group who in that search had broken away to become “Primitive Methodists” and then again splintered off into the “United Brethren,” centered one hundred miles south of Liverpool in Herefordshire.

Wilford Woodruff, as he recorded in his journal and testified throughout his life, was “led by the Spirit of the Lord,” to the United Brethren of Herefordshire.<sup>9</sup> He began his work in January in the heavily industrialized area between Liverpool and Herefordshire that produced English china and pottery for the world and was therefore called “The Potteries.” The area also produced a hellish landscape and way of life for the English laborers who left their farms to find a better life but found a worse. Later in 1840 Elder George A. Smith described this area in a letter, thus:

About 70,000 persons obtain a good living when there is employment but vast numbers are now out of work, in consequence of the depression in trade; consequently, in a state of starvation. I have seen more beggars here in one day than I saw in all my life in America. I have seen delicate females gathering manure to get a living for their famishing children.<sup>10</sup>

Elder Woodruff saw and later described the same area as he traveled from the Potteries through Birmingham on the way to Herefordshire:



I never saw any thing that comes so near the description of the Lake of fire & Brimstone Spoken of by the Revelator John as several miles of that country for it is one universal mass of coal pits & Iron mines & while thousands of human beings are under ground at work in the midst of fire, Brimston, sulpher, Gas & cole &c. the whole face of the earth & heavens air & horizon men, women & houses, are filled & covered with the composition of fire, cinders, Gas, sut [soot], & smooke of their misery & labours that assended up out of their piles, firmnesses, & pitts from day to day & from year to year.<sup>11</sup>

The Spirit led Elder Woodruff out of this hell to the lovely hills west of Ledbury and to “Hill Farm,” home of John Benbow, brother of a member of the Church Elder Woodruff had met back in the Potteries when he first arrived in January. John and his wife Jane were well-to-do tenant farmers and respected members, probably the founders, of the United Brethren, who had formed two conferences of hundreds of families within walking distance of Ledbury. These “seekers” were already careful Bible readers, committed to fundamental New Testament principles of personal piety and individual religious choice and lay leadership, and they were open to new revelation and the announcement of divine authority the Apostles brought. The Benbows were baptized; then the group’s leader, Thomas Kington; then many of its lay preachers, who immediately began to spread the word to others of the group. Soon hundreds were ready for baptism, and Wilford Woodruff was overwhelmed by the administrative, and even the basic physical, problems: “I cannot do the work alone,” he wrote Willard Richards, and a few days later added, “It has put me at times to my wits end to know what to do with so many places of preaching and preachers.”<sup>12</sup> But his journal, kept faithfully, reveals a wonderfully sensitive and balanced, as well as committed and harried, missionary. He is an intense observer of detail and a self-conscious reflector on the meaning of things. He includes whole chapters of background history of the places he visits, measures the buildings exhaustively, and reads history and travel accounts (Mosheim, Reverend Joseph Wolff). In the midst of the pressure and excitement of his success in Herefordshire, he takes time out for an afternoon spent meditating on top of a prominent hill, capped by Roman fortifications and overlooking five shires, that stands just north of Ledbury and about four miles from Benbow’s farm, where he was staying:

[May] 11. A visit on the Herefordshire Beacon which is the South part of Malvern Hill.

After having my mind prepared for a lonely walk & meditation by reading P. P. Pratts remarks upon the “eternal duration of matter,” I commenced assending this noted hill upon the south side of it & after arising several hundred feet I came to the top of an old ancient entrenchment about one mile in length reaching round all of this part of the hill & meeting



together. Then after rising another hundred feet I entered another Intrenchment like the one below & after this another & thus Intrenchment lay above Intrenchment untill I reached the top of the hill . . . from 10 to 1500 feet in highth & while surveighing the surrounding Country I could also behold the deep Intrenchments below me which it is supposed were flung up nearly a thousand years since & was capable of holding hunderds of thousands of persons which was the resort of the romans in the times of their wars. These hills are alltogether bare without timber but covered with grass which is grazed by sheep & asses. But I soon drew my thoughts from the busy rabbit, sheep, & asses to the solumn reflections which the ravages of time presented before me. O! Malvern thy lofty Hill bares up my feet while mine eyes take a survey of thy deep intrenchments. Thy mighty bulwarks, which have trembled by the roar of cannon, the clash of arms, & din of war has reechd around thy brow & died away in the vale beneath, while the blood of many a roman & Englishman too, have washed thy brow & soaked thy soil while they have fallen to rise no more. They sleep in death & time has earth'd them all & they are forgotten and blotted from the history & memory of man. Notwith-standing O! Malvern thou has been the Ark or refuge for thousands in the time of trouble or war.

Yet Willford is the ownly solitary soul that treads thy soil this day, & he alone bends his knee upon the highth of thy summit in the midst of the Clouds to offer up the gratitude of his heart unto that God who will soon level all hills exhalt all valies & redeem the earth from the curse of sin & prepare it for the abode of the Saints of the Most High.

I retired from the hill into the vale reflecting upon the rise, progress, decline, & fall of the empires of the earth, & the revolutions which must still transpire before the winding up scene & the comeing of Christ.

I preached at Candle light at Brother John Allard at Windpoint & had the spirit of God & Baptized 4 & confirmed them. I spent the night at Mr Joseph Symons. Distance 5 mil.<sup>13</sup>

Elder Woodruff's journal reveals a person who is engaging, even boyish, in his astonishment at his own success and joyous directness about himself. He comments often, "I had the Spirit of God & a good time."<sup>14</sup> He shares his dreams, which are almost humorous—they are so often about catching fish, an obvious symbol of the work of his ministry. But once, while still in the Potteries, he reports, "I dreamed that I saw men & children killed to be eat because of the soreness of a famine."<sup>15</sup> While in Herefordshire he tells of a boy of fifteen who is becoming notorious for running barefoot behind the stage each day, over eighty miles in twelve hours, "to get a living by receiving what money the passengers saw fit to give him about one shilling per day."<sup>16</sup>

Such images and sympathies—sharply reminiscent of Charles Dickens, who was writing his devastating accounts of Victorian England at this very time—appear in the other letters and diaries. All these Apostles were young (most in their early thirties), deep-feeling, and somewhat impulsive; and most came from working-class backgrounds, which made them extremely sympathetic to the plight of the English lower classes during this time of great economic stress in England's



“hungry forties.” They were not at all impressed with the distant, wealthy Anglican clergy nor the apparently unfeeling English royalty. George A. Smith, while working in London, tells in his diary of the “stupendous and beautiful structures” of St. Paul’s Cathedral, etc., and the “gold and silver of the rich exposed to view” on Regent Street. But he reflects that “the day is not far distant when the riches and glory of the Gentiles would flee away.”<sup>17</sup> After visiting Queen Victoria’s stables and seeing twenty-four beautifully matched cream-colored horses, he writes: “the beds they lie on are better than those which half the people in London sleep upon.”<sup>18</sup> Heber C. Kimball, in a letter to his wife, Vilate, describing this same visit to the queen’s palace and stables, is even more caustic: “You would be astonished to see the stur there is made over a little queen at the same time thousands Starving to deth fore a littel Bread.”<sup>19</sup>

But the most extensive and insightful critique was made by Brigham Young and Willard Richards, in a letter to Joseph Smith, 5 September 1840. Elder Young, at thirty-eight, was the oldest Apostle, and when he arrived in England in early April, he gathered the group together in a general conference. He ordained Elder Richards (who had been called and sustained earlier in America by Joseph Smith) and was in turn sustained as the quorum’s president, bringing it to nearly full strength and to organized condition for the first time in nearly two years. The next year was, I believe, the crucial year in the development of Brigham Young as the future successor to Joseph and also in the development of the quorum as a truly apostolic body, ready to take its scriptural place next to the First Presidency—a place, in fact, finally confirmed by Joseph for the quorum soon after it returned to Nauvoo.

Brigham Young was still the brash, tough, impetuous, uneducated, self-conscious frontiersman, but under the press of his great responsibilities and the experiences that followed as he fulfilled them, he changed rapidly. After hearing Woodruff’s report at the April conference, Brigham assigned the other Apostles various fields and responsibilities. Then, rather than remaining desk-bound at headquarters in Manchester, he immediately went to survey the remarkable harvest of converts in Herefordshire. As one result, after one month there he was able to borrow sufficient money to finance the projects the Apostles had approved, with much faith but no money, in April conference: publishing the Book of Mormon, a hymn book, and a magazine, and eventually beginning the emigration of Saints to Nauvoo that fall. The money was provided by two remarkable women prominent among the United Brethren, Jane Holmes Benbow and Hannah Pitt Kington, who lent their inherited dowries. Jane Benbow provided £250, over \$50,000 in our currency, and when Brigham later tried to repay her told him to use it to help others emigrate. The emigration, of course, started a stream that would eventually provide the labor and skill to build Nauvoo, the City of Joseph, and then to



transport and rebuild it in the Salt Lake Valley—fifty thousand European Saints by the end of the century. Heber C. Kimball described this remarkable result in his colorful and original style: “We have witnessed the flowing of the Saints towards Zion; the stream has begun, and we expect to see it continue running until it shall have drained the salt, or the light, from Babylon, when we hope to shout hosanna home.”<sup>20</sup>

Brigham did not go to Herefordshire simply to check things out as an administrator. He began immediately to experience what seems to have been crucial to his flowering as an Apostle and prophet, confirmation from the Lord of spiritual success and then the unique confidence that results from daring and successful venture in faith across a spectrum of supremely important life activities. The literature of those activities, when well expressed, is good and important. For instance, here are Elder Woodruff’s accounts of some of the results that came from Brigham’s involvement fully in the preaching, with all its risks and rewards:

May 14. I walked to Ledbury with Elder Young. From thence to Keysend Street and preached but amid much disturbance & as the meeting was about breaking up the congrega-tion was besmeared with rotten eggs. . . .

June 3. A notable miracle was wrought by faith & the power of God in the person of Sister Mary Pitt of Dymok. She had been Confined 6 years to her bed, with the spine which mostly deprived her of the use of her feet & ancles, & had not walked for 11 years ownly with the use of cruches. Elders Young Richards & Woodruff lade hands upon her and rebuked her infirmity & her ancle bones received strength & she now walks without the aid of crutch or staff.<sup>21</sup>

Other than Brigham Young’s longtime friend, Heber C. Kimball, the Apostle closest to Brigham was his own cousin, Willard Richards. Elder Richards had come with Elder Kimball on the first mission and had remained in England as part of the mission presidency. After he was ordained an Apostle, he accompanied Brigham and Wilford Woodruff down to Herefordshire, and later worked closely with him at headquarters in Manchester, coauthoring the excellent progress report sent to Joseph Smith in September as well as the essay “On Election and Reprobation,” published in February 1841 in the *Millennial Star*. Brigham not only used Richards as his only coauthor but evidently felt more free to reveal his insecurities and sense of humor to him than any other Apostle. In a 10 June letter about mission business he intrudes with joking comments on current affairs and members they both know back in America, as well as comments like “Be careful not to lay this letter with the new testament writings. If you doe som body will take it for a text after the M[illennium] and contend about it.” At the end he cautions, “Now my Dear Brother you must forgive all my nonsense and over look errors,”<sup>22</sup> and in his next letter, 17 June, he ends, “Excuse erours and mestakes. You must remember its from me.”<sup>23</sup>



In that 17 June letter, Brother Brigham moves with characteristic directness into an area that had caused Willard Richards some trouble before. After staying on in 1837, Willard had married an Englishwoman to whom he was much devoted, so much that he had been criticized by members of the Preston Branch for his wife's, as they supposed, too fancy dress and for his own solicitous attention to her, as they supposed at the neglect of his ministry. Joseph Smith himself became involved in defending him.<sup>24</sup> Now, apparently in answer to a question about how the young Apostle, on a mission but, unlike the others, near to his home, could appropriately see the wife he sorely missed, Brigham writes,

Now as to the other question about Jennet thus saith the scripiter he that provideth not fore his own house hold has—but perhaps he has no house. Well has he got a family, yes he has got a wife. Then let him see that she is taken care of and her hart comforted—but stop say som why doe you not take care of your famely. I doe when circumstances doe not render it otherwise. There is a difference betwene 3 month jorny and a fue hours ride. Now I say to anser my own feelings com as soon as you can leve things there. This is not by revelation or commandment so put it not with the apistles of the new testament. But Brigham sayes come and see your wife.<sup>25</sup>

The understanding and trust between Willard and Brigham made possible the long, strikingly insightful and articulate report they made on 5 September 1840. Brigham had been writing regularly to Joseph Smith, beginning with a report of his arrival and the first general conference, in his own hand and distinctive idiom, on 16 April. He had constantly asked for direction and approval of his reported actions, but he was not immobilized by the long mail delays. He had gone boldly ahead with decisions and the missionary work, and in the September letter he and Willard give an extended report of what the Apostles had learned:

The man who has only read the histories of the people of England, which we had seen before we left America, is liable to meet with some disappointments, at least, when he comes to make his introduction amongst them. This may in part be owing to the historian, for it is generally the case that what we find in history relates more particularly to the higher classes, in the nations, for England, unlike America, is divided into classes; many indeed, but they may all be comprised in three, . . . but the histories we refer to, have more generally treated of those of the higher order, or, at least, we find an acquaintance that those histories are now more applicable to the higher & middle classes than any other. But, perhaps a part may be owing to the great changes which have taken place in the nation, within a few years, with regard to money matters, which has caused a mighty revolution, in the affairs of the common people.

A few years since, and almost every family had their garden, their cow on the common & their pig in the sty, which added greatly to the comforts of the household; but now we seldom find either garden, cow or pig.

As we pass around among the country cottages & see the stone walls which are thrown down but more commonly the hedges in a decaying & mutilated state it is very naturally for us to inquire what have you here? &



what the cause of this destruction? & we generally get but one answer, “a few years ago I had a flourishing garden on the spot you now see & it was surrounded with this hedge which was planted by my own hand; I had a cow of my own which fed on yonder common—I labored on my masters farm, & had plenty of time, morning and evenings, to till my garden, in which I raised scarce enough for my family, & every year I had a good pig, plenty to eat, & we were happy, but our Lords & masters have become more avaricious, & are trying to get all they can themselves, & will hardly let the poor live. You see my landlord has made my garden into a meadow, & feeds his own cattle upon it; the Lord of the manor fenced in the common, so that I had no place to keep my cow & I was obliged to sell her; I killed my pig to prevent its starving. The small farms are united & made into large ones, so we could get nothing to do on the land. I have been obliged to go into the factory, with my wife & children, to get a morsel of bread;” or, “I have taken to handloom weaving, to keep my wife & little one from starvation.” . . .

Manufacturing is the business of England. The cotton mills are the most numerous, the weavers will get from 6 to 10 shillings per week, the spinners something more. The handloom weavers have to work hard to get 6 shillings per week. Now after paying 2 or 3 shillings rent per week—1 shilling for coal, besides taxes of every kind, we might say, for smoke must not go up [the] chimney in England without a tax, light must not come in at the window without paying duties, many must pay from 1 penny to 6 pence per week for water, & if we should attempt to tell all we should want a government list, after paying all taxes what think you will a family have left for bread stuff?

Add to this the tax on corn, which is a great share of the expense of the article, & what is left but starvation. . . . The poor are not able to keep dogs, & if they were they would have to pay from 8 shilling to 1 £ per head per annum, tax. There are taxes for living and taxes for dying, insomuch that it is very difficult for the poor to get buried any how, & a man may emigrate to America & find a grave, for less money, than he can get a decent burial for, in Old England. We scarce recollect an article without tax except cats, mice and fleas.

After what we have written we scarce need tell you that England is filled with beggars. They call at our doors, from 1/2 a Dozen to a Dozen per day. If we go in the streets they gather round us and it is hard to get rid of them without a penny, indeed, we do not try, so long as we can get a penny by buying or begging, for we remember that the measure we meet shall be measured to us again. Hunger & Rags are no curiosity here, & while things remain as they are what can we expect but theft, robbery, murder which now fill the land—Leaving out of the account, both as cause & effect the drunkenness & gambling, sweering & debauching—which are common on every hand?—

It will readily be discovered that the people have enough to do, to keep from dying with hunger without taking much thought for the improvement of the mind. Many of the people cannot read, a great many cannot write, children are admitted into the factories at 8 years old, working a part of the day & attending school a part till they are 14 years old & then work continually, though as yet we have been able to discover but very little benefit from the factory school, it is by Parliament compulsion on the part of the masters, & not of free will, of course the easier got over the better, the cheaper the master, the more money remains in pocket.<sup>26</sup>



The two Apostles describe the futility of strikes by the exploited workers, when there are thousands out of work and anxious to take their places, "so they continue to labor 12 hours in a day for almost nothing rather than starve at once."<sup>27</sup> The people have to live on "oatmeal & water boiled together . . . with sometimes a little Treacle, which is floor and molasses, or a little rancid butter, or skim milk made of whiting & water . . . if we mistake not."<sup>28</sup> And the two young men are frequently moved by their descriptions to the strongest condemnations:

There is no scheme which can be devised left unimproved to grind the face of the poor & . . . we feel that the time has nearly come for the words of James to be fulfilled, go to now ye rich men weep & howl for the miseries which are come upon you &c.<sup>29</sup>

The Mormon Apostles knew that the English workers were oppressed by others besides the industrialists and aristocracy. After commenting on the poor quality of learning available in the schools and the press, they note:

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 livings, thousands upon 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 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 apparently starvation on one hand & domination on the other. The Lord have mercy upon them.—Amen.<sup>30</sup>

These young, now painfully experienced, Apostles ask for advice or confirmation on a number of important decisions and close their letter:

[We] are trying to do what we can to send forth the Gospel. One of our Elders has gone to South Australia, one to the East Indies & we expect one to start for Hamburgh in Holland this week.—We want council & wisdom, & any thing that is good. Our motto is go ahead. Go ahead.—& ahead we are determined to go—till we have conquered every foe. So come life or come death we'll go ahead, but tell us if we are going wrong & we will right it.—

Your Brethren in the Everlasting Lord.<sup>31</sup>

What have I been reading? Significant experience, ideas, feelings, significantly expressed—that is, forcefully, memorably. We have the kind of insight literature gives to important historical events—such as the enclosure of common lands, industrialization of English weaving and pottery making, the famous Corn Laws that subsidized the farmers somewhat but oppressed the growing urban population, the simony,



multiple livings, and imperious distance that identified most of the clergy with the oppressive upper classes—all things which we admire Dickens and others for giving us so memorably in their fiction. But we have in these Apostles' voices something else as well—accounts of their real involvement, their actual experiences with poverty, hate, and injustice, but also with divine direction, healings, and the effects on others of holding out to them their visions of temporal and spiritual salvation. And the people of England responded, not only out of their need but also to the spiritual authority which spoke to them from these men who became their true ministers.

After working with the growing Church in Herefordshire, Wilford Woodruff describes the pastoral role the Apostles came increasingly to play and the poignance of their parting from the English people:

21 Sept. 1840 [Having returned for a district conference after serving in London] After standing upon my feet 8 hours in Conference, Conversing much of the time, Ordaining about 30, confirming some, healing many that were Sick, Shaking hands with some 400 Saints, wa[l]king 2 miles, and Preaching 4 hours in the Chimney Corner, I then lay down and dreamed of Ketching fish.

March 15, 1841 [During his last conference in Herefordshire, when he returned as the Apostles were preparing to leave for America] The Saints universally feel that the Judgements of God are near in this land & are anxious to gather with the Saints in Nauvoo as soon as possible. But many are vary poor and see no door open as yet, & some are placed in all the perplexing circumstances that possible can be, & are flocking around me by Scores at a time & asking council what to do.

As soon as meeting closed multitudes crouded around me, Many hands were presented on evry side to bid me farewell, many calling for me to bless them before I leave them, others crying out do lay hands on me & heal me before you go. Br Woodruff I am turned out of Doors for my religion. What shall I do. . . .

Many parted with me with tears in their eyes. Many of the Brethren and Sisters followed me to Turkey Hall whare I spent [t]he night, and filled the house untill a late hour Begging council & instruction at my hand.<sup>32</sup>

Gordon Thomas has reviewed the literary context in England during the early nineteenth century, one that, because of disappointment over supposed ancient writings that turned out to be fraudulent, poisoned the atmosphere for the Book of Mormon among the better educated and the upper classes. He concludes that the missionaries therefore “found difficulty in making appeals based on either logic or tradition. . . . The only valid appeal was to the Spirit.”<sup>33</sup> Literature can appeal to the Spirit, as the Book of Mormon itself proved, but the English people who were able to respond to that were the ones—generally lower class and uneducated—who were not dissuaded by either disappointments or by prejudices about what literature should be. They knew nothing about such literature. They responded to the preaching, the pastoral counseling,



the letters, the writings of the Apostles in the *Millennial Star*—all of this backed up by the *acts* of those same Apostles.

We have slowly begun to gather and edit and publish the accounts of those acts. In those accounts, I believe, there is literature which effectively conveys the spirit of those men and the quality of their remarkable experiences that converted hundreds and influenced directly the lives of thousands as the light, the salt, drained out of England to Zion in the wilderness. Those acts in turn influenced the lives of millions as the Church, from the strong base built by those converts in the West, turned outward in the twentieth century to teach and build temples throughout the world. I have faith that those Apostles' influence, as they with remarkable courage and vision firmly believed, even as they landed, alone and unknown, on an alien shore, will eventually bless billions of the children of God on this planet. I hope we will have the ability, which the educated class of England did not have in 1840, to see the quality of their literature, as it becomes available to us, even though it comes wrapped in rough and surprising packages, in strange genres, inelegant phrasing, bad spelling, faulty grammar. I hope we will humble ourselves to hear their humble voices and thus be blessed by *all* the qualities of the good literature they produced—that is, the qualities of significant experience, significantly expressed.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ronald K. Esplin, "Sickness and Faith, Nauvoo Letters," *Brigham Young University Studies* 15 (Summer 1975): 427–29.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 430.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 433.

<sup>4</sup>*Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844*, comp. Elden J. Watson (Salt Lake City: N. p., 1967), 57–58.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 58–59.

<sup>6</sup>John Taylor to Leonora Taylor, 30 January 1840, Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Journal of Discourses* 15:342–43.

<sup>10</sup>David J. Whitaker, "Harvest in Herefordshire," *Ensign* 17 (January 1987): 48.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Wilford Woodruff to Willard Richards, 3 April 1840, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>13</sup>Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–84), 1:446–48.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 450, 517.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 421.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 472.

<sup>17</sup>George A. Smith, Diary, 21 October 1840, George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 17 September 1840.

<sup>19</sup>Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, 19 September 1846, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>20</sup>*History of the Church* 4:132.

<sup>21</sup>Woodruff, *Journal* 1:449, 455.



<sup>22</sup>Brigham Young to Willard Richards, 10 June 1840, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>23</sup>Brigham Young to Willard Richards, 17 June 1840, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>24</sup>*History of the Church* 3:276–77.

<sup>25</sup>Young to Richards, 17 June 1840.

<sup>26</sup>Ronald W. Walker, “The Willard Richards and Brigham Young 5 September 1840 Letter from England to Nauvoo,” *BYU Studies* 18 (Spring 1978): 469–71.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 471.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 472.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 475.

<sup>32</sup>Woodruff, *Journal* 1:520, 2:62–64.

<sup>33</sup>Gordon K. Thomas, “The Book of Mormon in the English Literary Context of 1837,” *BYU Studies* 27 (Winter 1987): 44.



## Seeds of Fire

Long before this green and misted landscape  
Bore villages of any size

A prophet, vigorous with power, knelt  
And spoke a blessing on this place  
With words that fell like seeds of fire.

There was

*Glory hovering in the air  
Peace and gladness everywhere  
For the Light so rich and rare  
Blessed in its promise*

Abiding there for generations  
Like embers flickering with light  
The blessing lingered,  
Until one afternoon  
When all that latent glory flamed to life  
As Heber moved from Chatburn on to Downham.

There were men and women calling blessings on his head  
From doors and windows,  
Children gathering in celebration  
To follow him upon the narrow road  
All holding hands and singing hymns of Zion.

*Glory hovering in the air  
Peace and gladness everywhere  
For the Light so rich and rare  
Blessed in fulfillment*

Three times young Heber knelt  
To wash his tear-filled eyes  
With water from a cool, bright stream.

Then, standing in the vigor of the Lord  
He left another blessing hovering there in power.

—Randall L. Hall



# The Decline in Convert Baptisms and Member Emigration from the British Mission after 1870

Bruce A. Van Orden

For most of the nineteenth century the British Mission was the largest mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Between 1837, when Joseph Smith authorized Heber C. Kimball to lead the first LDS missionary entourage to Britain, and 1870, more people were baptized in the British Mission than in any other mission of the Church, and more Latter-day Saints emigrated to Utah from the British Isles than from any other place in the world. During the thirty-three years from 1837 through 1869, 95,232 people were baptized in the British Mission, an average of 2,886 per year. After Mormon emigration to America began in 1840, an average of 935 Saints left the British Isles every year in Church-sponsored parties. By 1870, a total of 28,063 people had come to America this way, and numerous others had come on their own in smaller groups. There were by this time 73,747 members of the Church in the nine stakes of Utah and southeast Idaho. Most were British immigrants or their offspring, a group that obviously provided considerable strength to the Church, comprising in most localities a majority of the adult Saints.<sup>1</sup>

Given the remarkable conversions during the missions of the Apostles to Great Britain in 1839 and 1840, it was natural that the Church should direct much of its missionary effort there in the years that followed. Generally, the work in this most fruitful of mission fields was directed by members of the Quorum of the Twelve, such as Wilford Woodruff (1845–46), Orson Hyde (1846–47), Orson Pratt (1848–51 and 1856–57), Franklin D. Richards (1851–52, 1854–56, and 1867–68), Amasa M. Lyman and Charles C. Rich (1860–62), George Q. Cannon (1862–64), Daniel H. Wells (1864–65, not a member of the Twelve, but a member of the First Presidency), and Brigham Young, Jr. (1865–67). Beginning in the 1850s, the responsibilities of the British Mission president, whose headquarters were in Liverpool, included supervision of the entire European Mission. In this capacity, he usually spent several

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Bruce A. Van Orden is an assistant professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.



weeks each year visiting missionaries and members in Scandinavia, Holland, Switzerland, and some of the German republics.

Though the mission continued to compare favorably in both baptisms and emigration with other missions of the Church for the remainder of the nineteenth century, the greatest years were over for the British Mission by 1870. Church membership in the British Isles had begun to decline steadily after a peak of more than thirty thousand in the early 1850s. By 1863, Saints in Britain numbered only 13,851; in 1871, membership was down to 7,206; by 1874, it had decreased to 5,423.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, much of this decline was caused by heavy emigration as almost a thousand Saints per year (992 average) left Britain for the United States during the 1860s. Between 1870 and 1875, however, emigration dropped to an average of only 697 per year, even though the journey had become much easier with travel by steamship and railroad. Though not less expensive in this new way, the journey from Liverpool to Utah required less than a month, compared to the several months it had taken by windships and oxtams.

Contributing to the decrease in emigration was a decrease in the rate of convert baptisms. While the average number of missionaries remained essentially constant (thirty per year during the 1860s and thirty-one per year during 1870–73), the average number of baptisms fell from 1,611 per year during the 1860s to 577 per year during 1870–75. Both baptism and emigration rates showed slight increases from 1876 to 1880, but after this the general decline continued for the rest of the century.<sup>3</sup>

It might appear on a superficial examination that this decline in missionary success in Great Britain was related to events occurring in Utah during the same period. Conflicts between Mormons and gentiles in Utah and between Mormons and the federal government had been intensifying throughout the 1860s and 1870s. The year 1870 marked the beginning of the U.S. government's "antipolygamy crusade," an endeavor that damaged the reputation of the Church and decreased its political and economic strength.<sup>4</sup> This "crusade," a term that seems to have arisen partly from the attitudes of Utah Territorial Justice James B. McKean, was given momentum by a series of events that occurred between 1870 and 1875. McKean, appointed in 1870, was an intensely religious Methodist with moral scruples against polygamy; he was also a member of the radical wing of the Republican Party, a group that was bent on reforming the South as well as the Mormons in Utah. Also in 1870, gentiles in Utah, together with Mormon nonconformists, established the Liberal Party in an attempt to counterbalance the political power of the Church. That same year, some twenty-five zealously anti-Mormon men formed the Gentile League, which maintained lobbyists in Washington to influence territorial appointments and direct legislation against polygamy.



In 1871, McKean decided to attack Brigham Young directly, and he had the Mormon leader arrested on charges of adultery and lasciviousness. Because of certain judicial errors on McKean's part, these charges were dropped six months later without President Young's ever coming to trial, but attacks against the Church continued to mount. Congress, under pressure from President Ulysses S. Grant, worked in 1873 to pass various pieces of antipolygamy legislation. Thanks to the efforts of Utah Territorial Delegate George Q. Cannon, however, by 1874 only the Poland Bill had passed, a law limiting the jurisdiction of Mormon-dominated courts and abolishing the offices of territorial marshall and attorney general in Utah. Continuing the crusade, federal officials in 1875 pushed forward several court cases, including the Ann Eliza Webb divorce from Brigham Young, the George Reynolds polygamy "test case," and the prosecution of John D. Lee for his part in the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

As time passed, the Church fell further and further into disrepute with the federal government and the American public. Ultimately the government, through successively harsher legislation during the 1870s and 1880s, was successful in sapping virtually all of the Church's economic strength. In 1890 the Church publicly discontinued its policy of plural marriage, and the crusade came to an end.

This conflict between gentiles and Mormons did not go unnoticed in the British Mission. Events in Utah and Washington that affected the Church were eagerly followed by missionaries and Saints in Britain in the pages of the biweekly *Millennial Star*. Each development in the anti-polygamy crusade was not only reported but explained, and from the Mormon point of view, eloquently elaborated upon, by assistant editors of the *Star* such as John Jaques, George Reynolds, James G. Bleak, John C. Graham, and L. John Nuttall. All of these men had been Church leaders and exponents of the faith in Zion, and none of them ever attempted to hide the polygamy controversy from the British Saints in order to protect their faith, desire to emigrate to Zion, or Church membership. Rather, these journalists presented lengthy, carefully considered articles on the doctrine of plural marriage. These men, whose loyalty to the kingdom of God had already been tested many times, strenuously defended the Church against its accusers, including gentiles in Utah, government officials, and American and British journalists. Even the President of the United States was not spared criticism by these men defending their church.

Always there was a spirit of optimism in the *Millennial Star* about the prospects of eventual victory over Mormonism's foes. "At the present time a great effort is being made in America to overthrow the work of God," observed John Jaques in an editorial. "It may be very trying to some of the Saints," he continued, "but He will overrule it for



the good of those who have the welfare of His work at heart, as He has done so many times in the past, and His work will advance the faster towards the accomplishment of its appointed destiny.”<sup>5</sup> In spite of this outward confidence, however, the leaders of the British Mission were obviously anxious about events in Utah. Eagerly they awaited American newspapers and telegraphic dispatches from Salt Lake City that kept them apprised of current events. In September 1871, when Judge McKean threatened the arrest of Brigham Young (a threat he carried out in October), leaders of the Church telegraphed the British Mission president, Apostle Albert Carrington, and summoned him to Utah at once. George Reynolds, who was left in charge of the mission, wrote to George Teasdale in Utah that the British press speculated that Brigham Young would be taken by government officials and hanged. “Our newspapers here are pretty much filled with the ‘End of Mormonism,’ ” he observed.<sup>6</sup> George F. Gibbs, who arrived in England just as Carrington was leaving for Utah, wrote home, “As soon as reports are flashed across the line unfavorable to the ‘Mormons,’ it is in the mouth of everybody and the press circulate it and make comments that polygamy is receiving its death blow at the hands of officials.”<sup>7</sup>

The missionaries naturally had to deal with the antipolygamy bias of the British citizenry. John Woodhouse, a forty-four-year-old native British missionary who was married to three women, reported that Mission President Joseph F. Smith had instructed the missionaries regarding polygamy:

not to thrust it forward, prominently, nor to go out of the way to preach it, but when information was sought on that principle to give it freely. And when the principle was attacked to defend it to the best of our ability and the wisdom given us. In my experience and travels, I found plenty of both kinds.<sup>8</sup>

Even though missionaries in various conferences of the British Mission would have experienced some concern for their leaders and fellow Saints in Utah during the antipolygamy crusade, there is no evidence that they themselves lost their faith or zeal for the work. Most missionaries were married; some of them practiced plural marriage and had numerous children. A majority of British missionaries were over forty years old and were mature in the faith. They rarely complained that the trouble over polygamy in Utah was a negative influence on missionary work or on preparation of members for emigration.<sup>9</sup> It cannot be concluded, then, that the decline in numbers of converts and emigrants in the British Mission after 1870 was primarily linked to polygamy or the antipolygamy crusade.

Other events in Utah during this period also caused some stir in the British Mission. First was the resignation of seventy-two-year-old



Brigham Young in April 1873 as Trustee-in-Trust for the Church and president of the Deseret National Bank and of ZCMI in order to devote his energies more fully to counseling the Saints and traveling through the settlements. The press in both the eastern United States and Great Britain proclaimed that the Mormon leader had resigned his position as President of the Church and that he was soon to leave Salt Lake City for retirement in Arizona. Some journalists postulated that this action would lead to the long-sought solution to the "Mormon problem." S. S. Jones, assistant editor of the *Millennial Star*, made this response to the situation:

As the news of President Young's abdication and retirement to private life was heralded forth by the press, placarded on the streets, and made a topic of general conversation, we did not think it at all necessary to issue any extra edition of the *Star* to quiet the minds of the Latter-day Saints in relation to these stirring rumors, knowing that they have become accustomed to exaggerated reports and false alarms, and like troops who have once stood fire, are not so easily excited or thrown into confusion.

Jones then assured the missionaries and British Saints that President Young's resigning from business positions "will in nowise affect his position as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."<sup>10</sup> As far as I have been able to determine, no missionaries ever mentioned in writing that this brouhaha was a factor in their missionary efforts. It is likely that, if anything, the increased attention drawn to the Church would have been beneficial to the work.

The Panic of 1873 in the United States had a more important effect upon the British Mission. History shows that Brigham Young's leadership and the United Order system he instigated to cope with the economic crisis helped Utah weather the storm better than most of the United States did.<sup>11</sup> As D. M. Stuart of Ogden assured Acting British Mission President L. J. Herrick, "All is peace in our Mountain Home, and there is plenty, notwithstanding the money panic in the States. Improvement goes on, and railroads are being built north and south, through the Territory. New developments of mineral wealth are coming to light on every hand."<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the Saints in Utah did suffer, as Herrick learned from other observers, and this suffering had its effects in Britain. Before 1873, money from Utah's Perpetual Emigration Fund had substantially aided the British emigration effort, but in 1874 and 1875 funds from Utah were almost nonexistent. Consequently, emigration dipped from an annual average of 785 over the years 1869–73 to 650 in 1874 and 389 in 1875. By 1877, the effects of the depression were over, and emigration from Britain to Utah enjoyed a comparative rejuvenation.

From the accounts of the missionaries themselves, it would seem that a more important factor in their declining success than the anti-polygamy crusade and other events in Utah was the comparative apathy of the Saints in Britain. Most of the missionaries who arrived in England



each year from 1870 to 1875 were former Britishers. Throughout these six years, missionaries repeatedly commented on the noticeable change in religious fervor that had taken place among members of the Church in their homeland. Charles Wilcken lamented from Birmingham that some members were “neither hot nor cold” and added, “Satan is working hard to rock the Saints to sleep, and in some instances he is doing it most effectually.”<sup>13</sup> “Many of the folks have degenerated into good old singalong sectarians,” observed George Reynolds. “Apparently not a spark of the true living spirit of the gospel is with them. They would make mighty good Methodists perhaps. They are always glad to see an elder, but there’s not the true ring about them, they are so fast asleep you can’t wake them up.”<sup>14</sup> George Barton wrote, “We have some who do not appreciate their standing in the Church and Kingdom of God, being as dead branches attached to a thrifty tree, and it seems that forbearance will soon cease to be a virtue, unless they retrace their steps and show by their works that they are willing to keep the commandments of God.”<sup>15</sup>

Obviously, one of the reasons for this apathy was that many of the most devoted and prosperous of the Saints had already left Britain for Utah. “The saints who had means have emigrated to Zion,” wrote John Bennion, “& those left are either very poor or milk & water Saints & I almost pity the Elders who have now to labour in this land.”<sup>16</sup> Poverty among the British Saints was clearly a major factor in preventing many from emigrating and in causing them to appear apathetic. Some members of the Church were simply without employment and struggled merely to live; saving money to leave for America was out of the question. “The Saints in [Kent] Conference are poor, and many of the brethren are out of employment, consequently they cannot do much at present in rolling on the great work,” explained George Barton. “Many of them have been in the Church twenty years and upwards, have travelled and preached the Gospel, have drunk the dregs of poverty for the sake of truth, and are here to-day waiting patiently for the time of their deliverance to come.”<sup>17</sup>

British missionaries returning to England in the 1870s also noticed that attention to religion in general had diminished in the land they had left as much as twenty years before. John Woodhouse wrote:

My first surprise was to find a great change in the people since the time when as a native priest I had first preached the gospel there. Then there seemed to be interest and the people anxious and they would come to hear the gospel. But now this seemed changed. The people seemed to have lost interest in religion.<sup>18</sup>

John Bennion noted as he passed out religious pamphlets to uninterested Englishmen that the people were “almost universally satisfied with their own creeds,” which were “very numerous.”<sup>19</sup> Missionaries sometimes attributed this change in religious interest to the rapidly



increasing wickedness that was overtaking “Modern Babylon,” as prophesied in the scriptures. George Reynolds considered these changes to be a sign of the times and noted:

A decay has taken place in English life, during the few years I was in Utah. Crime is increasing, licentiousness is spreading, drunkenness is growing, disease is developing, the poor appear to be poorer, if the rich are not richer and the rising generation of Englishmen appear to be a sickly, stunted race, bearing the marks of a degenerating nation.<sup>20</sup>

The elders generally concluded that the time was short before the inhabitants of Britain would reap the punishment of their wickedness. “It seems as though but few more will be gathered from this land until some great calamity overtakes the nations,” observed John Bennion.<sup>21</sup>

If Mormon missionaries of the time reflected pessimistically upon the status of religion in Britain in the 1870s, modern scholars might confirm the evaluation.<sup>22</sup> The religious apathy of the Age of Enlightenment was overcome in Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by a succession of religious crusades. The last noticeable “religious awakening” of the nineteenth century in Britain occurred in 1859. The impressive number of Mormon conversions between 1839 and 1860 came, therefore, during a period of general religious fervor. But in “a slow, uneven transformation involving European civilization as a whole,” as Gilbert puts it, secularization supplanted religious fervor in Britain. “During the past two centuries industrialization has acted as a powerful catalyst to hasten the transformation.”<sup>23</sup> Davies describes the years following 1860 as a “period of explosions” of “faith grappling with doubt” which led to a “theological revolution.” Not only did science (especially Darwinism) “throw down the gauntlet” to religion, but historical and literary critics attacked the biblical accounts of the Creation, the Flood, and the wondrous events in the life of Jesus. Hence the whole of British society lost considerable interest in the Bible and in the claims of religionists in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the end of the century, agnosticism had become not only respectable but almost universal.<sup>24</sup> Cox notes the decline, between 1850 and 1880, even of the Nonconformist denominations, among which would be included The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>25</sup> Once again the patterns of religious activity among Mormons after 1870 fell into the greater British pattern.

It appears, then, that although jarring events in Utah after 1870 might at first glance appear to be responsible for the decline in convert baptisms and emigration, these events, though of great interest to the missionaries and British Saints, actually had relatively little to do with the declines. Mormon polygamy, after all, had been widely known in Britain and had created anti-Mormon prejudice as early as the 1850s.



Extreme poverty had beset the Church in Utah on other occasions, such as in 1855–59. Still, missionary work and emigration had gone forward with great strides in the 1850s and 1860s. Much more important than the antipolygamy crusade and the Panic of 1873 to the difficulties in the British Mission after 1870 were the apathy of many members of the Church remaining in Britain and the everdeclining religious fervor among the people of Great Britain in general.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>These statistics are derived from baptism and emigration tables in Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain: A Brief Summary of the Activities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the United Kingdom, with Emphasis on Its Introduction One hundred Years Ago* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1937), 243–45, and from *Deseret News 1987 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1987), 252. Dean L. May demonstrates the dominance of British immigrants in Mormon Utah by 1870 in "A Demographic Portrait of the Mormons, 1830–1980," in Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry, eds., *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective* (Provo: Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, 1983), 37–69.

<sup>2</sup>There is no single list of membership statistics by years for the British Mission for this early period. Drawing from sporadic journal and manuscript records, Gladys Noyce of the LDS Church Historical Department compiled the volume, "Church Membership, 1850–1945," from which these statistics were drawn.

<sup>3</sup>Evans, *Century of "Mormonism,"* 243–45.

<sup>4</sup>The following are good sources on this period: James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 341–66; Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen, *Mormons and Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 1984), 87–99; Edward Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 14–20; Gustive O. Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1971), 61–79; Gustive O. Larson, "Government, Politics, and Conflict," in *Utah's History*, ed. Richard D. Poll et al. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 243–56; Bruce A. Van Orden, "George Reynolds: Secretary, Sacrificial Lamb, and Seventy" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1986), 53–93.

<sup>5</sup>*Millennial Star* 32 (10 May 1870): 296.

<sup>6</sup>George Reynolds to George Teasdale, 16 October 1871, MS 932, Reynolds Collection, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo (hereafter cited as Reynolds Collection).

<sup>7</sup>George F. Gibbs to Julie, 10 October 1871, George F. Gibbs Letterbook, 1871–73, Library–Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

<sup>8</sup>James Mercer and Kate Woodhouse Kirkham, "John Woodhouse: His Pioneer Journal, 1830–1916," typescript, 40, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, and LDS Church Archives.

<sup>9</sup>The LDS Church Archives and the Harold B. Lee Library contain numerous diaries and reminiscences of British missionaries. These, together with reports from missionaries published in the *Millennial Star* for this period, provide the evidence for these conclusions.

<sup>10</sup>"President Young's Resignation," *Millennial Star* 35 (22 April 1873): 248.

<sup>11</sup>See Leonard J. Arrington et al., *Building the City of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 99–104, 136–37, 283, 294.

<sup>12</sup>*Millennial Star* 36 (13 January 1874): 26.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.* 35 (11 February 1873): 91.

<sup>14</sup>George Reynolds to George Teasdale, 27 January 1872, Reynolds Collection.

<sup>15</sup>*Millennial Star* 32 (25 January 1870): 60.

<sup>16</sup>John Bennion to Mary Bennion, 13 January 1873, John Bennion Letters, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>17</sup>*Millennial Star* 32 (25 January 1870): 60. The poverty of the British Saints was a continual theme in the reports of the missionaries.

<sup>18</sup>Mercer and Kirkham, "John Woodhouse: His Pioneer Journal," 38.

<sup>19</sup>John Bennion to Mary Bennion, 21 November 1872, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>20</sup>George Reynolds to Israel Barlow and Members of the Sixth Quorum of Seventies, 4 January 1872, Reynolds Collection.



<sup>21</sup>John Bennion to Mary Bennion, 13 January 1873, LDS Church Archives. Other missionaries reflected on the same theme in their reports to the mission president and in their journals.

<sup>22</sup>See Alan D. Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularization of Modern Society* (London: Longman Group, 1980), 76–80; Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870–1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3–20; Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Newman to Martineau, 1850–1900* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), 173–211; Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 161–88; David L. Edwards, *Christian England from the 18th Century to the First World War* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 295–301.

<sup>23</sup>Gilbert, *Post-Christian Britain*, 17.

<sup>24</sup>Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 173–74, 181–84.

<sup>25</sup>Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, 7.



## Before a Journey

Where are the wind and rain?  
A continent and seas  
away. Going there again?  
Yes: I'm no longer at ease.

Rain visits untended graves;  
wind stirs their wet grass.  
The grain swirls into waves  
as the clouds sail up and pass.

(Sunlight touched the church tower;  
then the rack closed again.)  
The wind mourns hour by hour;  
hour after hour chants the rain.

Towards night the skyline clears;  
I leave a shore for a shore.  
The good rain sheds my tears  
and the brisk winds bring more.

—Arthur Henry King

# The Influence of Traditional British Social Patterns on LDS Church Growth in Southwest Britain

Madison H. Thomas

Certain legends in Great Britain tell of Jesus of Nazareth, who is said to have spent his young manhood there. Legends aside, the real impact of Christianity in Britain began when Pope Gregory I sent the Roman monk Augustine and forty other missionaries to Kent in 597. Augustine followed good missionary practice in approaching a part-member family and succeeded in converting Ethelbert, Saxon king of Kent, whose Frankish wife Bertha was already a Christian. Christianity gradually spread, and through the succeeding centuries Britain has been predominantly Christian.

But this was a special kind of Christianity, a religion intertwined with political and social power. Almost from the beginning, and especially after the establishment of the Church of England as an official arm of the government, church affiliation in Britain could be a matter of life and death. In the earliest editions of the Book of Common Prayer was printed a proclamation by the king to the effect that anyone teaching religion from other sources might be imprisoned for life and that local political officials were to enforce church attendance and levy fines against the absent. Since 1534, the monarch of England has been the head of the church. Since 1539, the government has had power to legislate changes in doctrine. Even today, the House of Lords includes twenty-six bishops. Evidence of the intertwining of religion with the political and social structure can still be seen in old castles, where one typically finds a great hall, built to serve as the seat of local government, a small chapel for worship, and a torture chamber to enforce both.

The feudal system as it developed in Britain created in the people a high level of in-group loyalty, a distrust of outsiders, and a ready acceptance of one's place within the group, qualities that were later to prove very effective in spreading British power around the globe. Residues of these feudal and colonial traditions are powerful forces in Great Britain to this day and have influenced the British attitudes toward Mormonism.

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Madison H. Thomas is a physician specializing in neurology. He served from 1982–85 as president of the England Bristol Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is currently serving on a public communications mission in New York City.



Since the arrival of missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Britain in 1837, there have been three phases of Church growth. First was the period of rapid, even explosive, growth that peaked in 1868. During this time large numbers of British Saints emigrated to the United States. The second phase was characterized by relatively low rates of convert baptisms, which, along with continuing emigrations, kept Church membership in Britain small most of the time. A third phase began after the end of World War II, when significant numbers of the Saints remained to build Zion in Britain rather than emigrating to the United States. Even with this change, however, and even with an expanded missionary force bringing in more new converts each year, the growth of the Church during this third phase has seemed painfully slow.<sup>1</sup> Visiting Church leaders in recent decades have described the work in Britain as being on a “plateau.” My purpose in this essay is to examine some possible reasons for this situation, drawing on my own experience as well as my perception of certain attitudes and practices of British culture and tradition.

Several years ago, a rapid increase in convert baptisms in southwest England and southern Wales, the area served by the England Bristol Mission, brought to the surface underlying tensions between the full-time missionaries and some local members of the Church. I first became aware of these tensions on my very first morning as mission president, 5 July 1982. I had been in the office for less than half an hour when a stake president called long distance and spent more than forty minutes expressing his dissatisfaction with the work of the missionaries and insisting that almost none of the new converts would remain active in the Church. Twenty minutes after the end of this conversation, a local bishop walked into my office and vigorously delivered the same message for almost an hour. Half an hour later, a high councilor responsible for missionary work phoned to ask if he could make a sixty-mile round trip to tell me essentially what the others had said, that people were not being “properly converted” by the missionaries and so would not remain active in the Church after baptism.

Over the next several weeks, I listened to many more people from all parts of the region. Although these members had a wide range of concerns and impressions about the Church, they consistently expressed uneasiness about recent increases in baptisms. This uneasiness seemed to grow out of a more general, longstanding resistance to the work of the missionaries. I heard stories going back ten or twenty years, stories about “baseball baptisms” and subsequent excommunications, even though the era of such unfortunate incidents had long since passed.

I also saw the tension from the point of view of the missionaries. A very reliable elder told me he was afraid to take investigators to Church meetings in one ward because of the rejecting attitudes of the members.



Later, a stake president reported that over the course of several years dozens of people had been baptized within the boundaries of this same ward. None of them had remained active except one who had been converted by a member friend. Over and over, I heard priesthood leaders describe full-time missionaries as “enemies of the Church,” while missionaries saw the local priesthood leaders and members as obstructions to Church growth. Many bishops and branch presidents systematically resisted baptisms, would in fact refuse to permit baptisms they did not feel good about, even though all the usual requirements had been met. As far as I could determine, the actual missionary work had almost always been excellent. The existing dissatisfactions among local members seemed to have been intensified by the recent increased rate of applications for baptism.

Faced with this problem, I began my study of historical, cultural, social, and organizational relationships in an effort to achieve a better understanding of the feelings of the local Church members and the frustrations of local Church leaders. As a result of this study, I gained great respect for the sincerity and dedication of members of the Church in Britain. Some patterns in their behavior that I had heard criticized, I could now see as honorable and proper in light of long-standing traditions. This made working with those I came to know as valiant local members much easier, and opportunities for change opened up. Careful planning with remarkably sensitive and faithful regional, stake, and local leaders brought about a period of altered relationships among missionaries and local Saints in one section of Britain.

#### RESIDUAL FEUDALISM

In 1986, Kenneth I. Shine, dean of the UCLA School of Medicine, observed, after working closely with the British people for some time, that “Britain remains a society with a strong class structure.”<sup>2</sup> The British class system, an outgrowth of feudalism, even today acknowledges special privileges (and obligations) for royal and upper-class families and creates a sense of personal “place” in society. Indeed, official government publications include accepted systems of social class. In some ways, it can be said that modern British socialism has extended the benevolent protectionism of the ancient feudal lords, who needed loyal and reasonably healthy subjects to fight off invaders from neighboring fiefs. Commentators such as Frost and Jay and Sampson have stressed the persistence of strong influences of class and group identity in modern British social traditions and behavior.<sup>3</sup> Sampson suggests that modern attempts to reform the educational system have led not to the breaking down of the class system but to even greater social polarization.



At least two vestiges of the British class system are apparent among members of the LDS church in Britain: first, the need for intense loyalty to one's own "in group" combined with a distrust of outsiders; and second, an awareness of and comfort within one's own class and a sense of discomfort when out of it. I have been told repeatedly by convert members of the Church that they felt like strangers and intruders for an extended period—often for years—before their loyalty and acceptability had been thoroughly proven. One missionary sister from another part of England spoke of having literally to "fight" for a place in her local ward.

The British class system receives its strength partly from the self-reinforcing stoicism it has produced through the ages and the attitudes it encourages of tolerance for the way things are. The Church of England and its offshoots, with their concepts of predestination, arose in and could easily accommodate a class system. Mormonism, however, with its doctrines of equality before the Lord, is in many ways the "American religion" it has been called. For the British, there can be difficulties in an organization led by Americans. Both of my predecessors noted that class consciousness among British members contributed to differences in leadership approaches, difficulties in delegating responsibility, and tendencies to deal differently with people according to class status.<sup>4</sup>

The class system, then, encourages dependency relationships and a reliance upon the views of those accepted as leaders. These characteristics, however, can also be accompanied by resentment over the implied superiority of others. For example, British Saints both accept and resent the fact that after nearly a hundred and fifty years the Church in Britain is only partially financially self-sufficient and that four times as many missionaries are sent to Great Britain as are called from there. In the early days of the Church, these problems were not so apparent, as many of the Saints had one eye on the doctrine and the other eye on an opportunity to leave behind the class system and their place in it. But in later years, especially since the charge of President Joseph Fielding Smith to build a "British church,"<sup>5</sup> the historical patterns underlying British society have become highly relevant to the work of the Church.

The LDS church in Britain has for the most part been a working-class church. Few members are from upper classes, reputedly because such members are not accepted and feel uncomfortable out of their own class. At the other end of the social scale, missionaries have been criticized for bringing in members from the lower classes, especially the unemployed who some feel are a drain and will never be able to support the Church. Some people are said to have joined the Church merely to gain access to Church welfare help, but this does not seem to be a major motive, given the availability in Britain of extensive government assistance.



Yet the strong in-group mentality can alter these patterns within local congregations, as is apparent in a situation reported to me by M. W. Nelson. In late 1982, Elder Nelson and his companion were assigned to a branch where there had been no new members for many years. The branch president asked the missionaries to bring in solid families to strengthen the branch. They did. They brought in four families and a mature sister, all of whom were stable and had steady income from employment. The missionaries visited these new converts a year later and found all of them inactive because none could tolerate the rejecting treatment given them by the older members of the branch, who were mostly unemployed. Several years later, the former missionaries returned to England and made another visit to this area. They found all of these people still inactive, although every one of them still had a strong testimony of the truth of the gospel. Elder Nelson said, "The four families could have been a nucleus for a strong branch if it hadn't been for the old members."

#### THE COLONIAL PATTERN

Only a few decades ago, the British Empire circled the world. British troops and traders invaded, colonized, and ruled one native population after another "for their own good." British domination, however, was not always appreciated, and freedom from it was often won only after long and bitter struggle and much bloodshed, as in the cases of the American colonies and India. Many British are still sensitive about the loss of the empire, and this sensitivity can be exacerbated when they find themselves subjected to colonialist practices. During the earliest years of the Church in Britain, missionaries worked somewhat like recruiters for a foreign power, winning converts and arranging for emigration to their home base. Later mission presidents functioned much like colonial administrators, managing the affairs of the Church, replacing emigrating native leaders with full-time foreign missionaries as unit after unit was decimated and needed to be built up again.

During the period of heavy emigration, these measures were necessary. However, with the shift in emphasis away from emigration, the mission president sometimes functioned not only as "colonizer" but also as "governor" over local members. Because of insufficient numbers of local Church leaders, this American colonialism was tolerated for a time. However, after Church government was transferred to local stake presidents and bishops, the mission president's role became somewhat problematical. In the eyes of the local Church members, the mission president had all the trappings of a territorial governor—a prestigious title, a body of full-time troops, a



fleet of vehicles, "connections" with headquarters, and a very large house. (We lived in the smallest mission president's home in Britain, but it was larger than the homes of almost all of the local priesthood leaders.)

If the mission president was the foreign governor, his "troops" were his invasion force. I repeatedly heard comparisons of Mormon missionaries to the American servicemen who were stationed in Britain during World War II, an "invasion" that was deeply resented by many British. The standing British joke about the G.I.'s is still frequently repeated: "There are only three things wrong with the Americans: they are overpaid, oversexed, and over here." While two of those three objections do not apply to the LDS missionaries, they too have at times been seen as a threat to British life. Like the G.I.'s, the early Mormon missionaries disrupted British families by taking individual loved ones back to the States. That threat has diminished, but others have taken its place. Paradoxically, the more successful the missionaries are in gaining new converts, the more some older members feel that their "territory" is being invaded.

Added to this is a very real problem the work of the missionaries presents to the local Saints. For the mission president and his "troops," success means gaining baptisms, "winning" converts in Britain. For local Church leaders, success is measured by the continued activity in the Church and progress in the gospel of the members of their congregations. The "successes" of the missionaries, then, can mean increased problems for the local leaders, whose wards or branches might already have many times more inactive than active members.

It is not surprising, then, that a polarization occurred between the aims and attitudes of the "invaders" and those of the local Church members and that a real, though publicly unacknowledged, "resistance movement" developed to thwart the work of the American missionaries. One General Authority in 1971 deplored this phenomenon as "friction."<sup>6</sup> Correlation efforts, which recognized two separate "forces" in the same sphere, although applied diligently, did not resolve the problem. In the area served by the England Bristol Mission, the retention rate of new converts was so low that growth of the Church was practically nil. In spite of millions of dollars spent and more than two thousand man-years of missionary effort, which produced thousands of baptisms, the net growth of the Church in this area during a base ten-year period was about one-half of one percent per year, less than would be accounted for by the children turning eight in member families. It appeared that the local priesthood leaders were correct in their impression that people were being lost about as fast as they were gained, almost irrespective of what mission presidents and full-time missionaries did.



## A UNIFIED SYSTEM

The sense of relief among leaders and members when these matters were at last brought into open discussion was great. It seemed to me that those involved felt now as Joseph Smith must have felt in the dark days before calling Heber C. Kimball to go to Britain, "that something new must be done for the salvation of His Church."<sup>7</sup>

These British Saints accepted at face value the statement of their prophet "that convert baptisms are not the responsibility of the Missionary Department of the Church, but are the responsibility of the ecclesiastical line officers and members of the Church."<sup>8</sup> Thus, under the direction of General Authorities, and following handbook instructions, a unified system for missionary work and fellowshipping of converts was developed in southwest Britain. Details were worked out in meetings of Regional Representative Donald V. Norris with five highly supportive stake presidents, the mission president, and the stake mission presidents. The plan was approved in a regional council meeting before going to the executive administrator, Elder Paul H. Dunn, for final amendments and endorsement.

Under the unified system, direction of the day-to-day activities of full-time missionaries was put into the hands of local priesthood leaders. Although I continued as the full-time mission president, I was now referred to as the "missionary president," and I turned many of my former prerogatives over to local mission presidents in the five stakes. Priesthood leaders, especially stake presidents, were quick to use the term "missionary president," as this term seemed to imply that the American president neither presided over "their" territory nor had responsibility for "their" missionary work. The local leaders now formed a regional committee on growth, with the Regional Representative as chairman and myself as executive vice-chairman. Members faithfully traveled hundreds of miles every month to meet and plan for the missionary work throughout the region. Since the boundaries of the region and the mission were the same, all plans were then reviewed for approval in regional council meetings.

Administrative support was provided by the full-time missionary office. I continued to have responsibility for receiving, training, motivating, disciplining, and monitoring the health and welfare of full-time missionaries. A ward mission leader was given responsibility to direct the work of full-time missionaries assigned to his unit.

At local discretion, full-time missionaries now began, in addition to their traditional proselyting work, to join local members in helping new members stay active and inactive members return to participation in the Church. In some wards and branches with little local priesthood strength, it became standard practice for full-time and stake missionaries



to teach the lessons for new members until home teachers became available. This led to continuing contacts with new members as ideal referral sources. In stronger areas, missionaries spent less time on retention and reactivation and more on finding and teaching, all under the general direction of the bishop or branch president.

Missionaries assigned to wards and branches became mission leader assistants, and zone leaders became mission president assistants, assigned to visit local Church units and support the local mission president and his associate in each stake. A committee on growth, chaired by the ward mission leader, included priesthood and Relief Society representatives and stake and full-time missionaries. They generally met each week to consider both proselyting and fellowshipping work.<sup>9</sup>

This unified system brought about some dramatic changes in attitudes. Eliminating a source of internal friction seemed also to help reduce the backbiting in wards and branches that had been noticed by visiting authorities. As members became aware that their own bishops and ward mission leaders actually were in charge of missionary work (as directed by their prophet), their sense of being invaded by the Americans or their agents in the form of new members seemed to diminish. Investigators and new members were welcomed as being part of "us" instead of "them." Since converts were no longer alienated by attitudes of the congregations they joined, a much larger percentage of new members remained active in the Church. The rate of activity one year after baptism rose on the average from 10 to 80 percent, as gauged by stake leaders, who felt a sense of growth and increasing strength (see table 1). So even though fewer converts were baptized now that missionary efforts were not entirely focused on proselyting, the actual increases in committed members of the Church doubled, even tripled over the previous period.

From the countless examples of changing attitudes that were reported to me, I can mention just a few. On one occasion, it became known that a stake patriarch had said he would not attend a planned baptism and was actively opposing attendance by other members. When a sister missionary talked with him, attempting to understand his point of view, she found that he felt the proposed candidates were not worthy of baptism without the eight or nine months of teaching that had preceded his own baptism. When the missionary explained that the baptism had been scheduled by the ward mission leader and that the current missionary program prepared people for further learning after baptism, the attitude of the patriarch changed, and he and his family and many friends joined in welcoming the new members.

In one branch that had been torn by dissension for several years, attendance had dwindled to twenty or twenty-five members, and no new members had come in for more than two years. Under the unified system,

TABLE 1  
 Convert Baptisms, Retention, and Net Growth in England Bristol Mission, Bristol England Region, 1982-85

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Missionaries</u> | <u>Approximate Baptisms</u> | <u>Estimated Retention</u> | <u>Net Growth</u> |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1982        | 170                 | 1000                        | 10%                        | 100               |
| 1983        | 130                 | 500                         | 25%                        | 125               |
| 1984        | 115                 | 250*                        | 75%                        | 180               |
| 1985        | (Projected)         | 300                         | 80%                        | 240               |
| **          | **                  | 440                         | 80%                        | 350               |

\*The 250 converts in 1984 were about the same as in most of the years from 1971 to 1981, even with a major reduction in the number of missionaries. The improved net growth came from improved retention of new members.

\*\* Adjusted for number of missionaries at 1982 level



full-time missionaries were assigned in what was termed a "support mode" to work primarily to help the branch president strengthen the branch. The missionaries began visiting all the member families in the company of a branch mission leader. Often these visits were the first visits of any sort by members of the Church that the family had had in several years. In a matter of weeks, attendance at Church had doubled, and friends of members were attending as investigators.

In another branch, members who had problems with the Word of Wisdom repeatedly undermined the work of the full-time missionaries by telling investigators they were not actually required to live as the missionaries were teaching. In this case, when sister missionaries were put entirely under local priesthood direction, several people were brought back to full activity in the Church and began to fill teaching and leadership positions, which caused growth in the branch for the first time in several years.

Of course, many factors have a bearing on a solid increase in the growth of the Church in a particular area. But it would seem that between 1982 and 1985 in southwest Britain, the principal factor in such a change was the introduction of a unified system that placed responsibility for missionary work and fellowshipping and strengthening of new converts on the shoulders of local priesthood leaders and required that the Church-appointed mission president step down from traditional roles to serve primarily as a support to local efforts.

The unified system as originally established remained in operation for just a little longer than one year. After that time, changes in administrative personnel brought about the beginning of elimination of major features of the program. Other factors that contributed to changes after January 1985 include the change from memorized to informal discussions, a change in sequence of discussions, changing leadership, and the extension of mission calls from eighteen to twenty-four months. Therefore, comparisons after that date would have to recognize a number of variables that are difficult to evaluate.

The unified system had other benefits in addition to the increased harmony between full-time missionaries and local Church members. No specific efforts were made to study the effects of decreasing the flow of disappointed or disgruntled inactive or disaffected Mormons into British communities, but it does seem reasonable to assume that for decades past such a factor would have had a negative impact on the image of the Church and the potential for growth, especially in smaller communities. It is likely that the unified system was of benefit to this situation.

It is undeniable that the unified system had an effect on full-time missionaries. Before the unified system, when there were two separate and not always compatible missionary forces, some full-time missionaries gave an impression of being high-powered individuals who were



more concerned with numbers than with the gospel and who, on occasion, rode roughshod over the feelings of local members and leaders in order to make their baptism goals. After working closely with members under the unified system, the missionaries in general seemed more mature, more considerate, and more seriously committed to broader principles. The missionaries even drove more slowly, and vehicle accident rates went down.

It seemed to me that the American missionaries could adapt quite readily to whatever system was prevalent. And for the missionaries from Britain and other European countries, who frequently had reported personal experience with polarization in their home wards and branches before starting their missions, the unified approach seemed most welcome indeed.

In relating these personal experiences, I do not mean to suggest that the problems in our mission and the useful solutions we found could necessarily apply directly to all parts of the world. It is possible, however, that others might find our experience useful. In trying to understand my responsibilities as a mission president, I found that the prevailing tendency to study how nonmembers view the Church was valuable, but it gave only part of the picture. More helpful was study of how various groups within the Church saw one another, and this study involved understanding the social context in which the local Church found itself. To the extent that our experience in the England Bristol Mission can be extended to other areas, it would seem that such study could have a decidedly beneficial influence on the growth of the Church.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Growth in 1985, for example, was 1.8 percent (see LDS Church Membership Statistical Reports [Salt Lake City: Church Educational System, 1985]).

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth I. Shine, "A Yank in London—Observations on British Medicine and Science," *Western Journal of Medicine* 145 (September 1986): 406.

<sup>3</sup>David Frost and Antony Jay, *The English* (Briercliff Manor, N.Y.: Stein and Day, 1968), 25–42; Anthony Sampson, *The Changing Anatomy of Britain* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), 58, 127–28.

<sup>4</sup>Personal communication from C. E. Wonnacott, president, England Bristol Mission, 1976–79; personal communication from Lorenzo N. Hoopes, president, England Bristol Mission, 1979–82. President Hoopes subsequently has mentioned his impression that while some members are negative about the missionary effort others are more pro-American and supportive of vigorous missionary activity. Even larger numbers, he notes, have no strong views either way and tend to support the views of those perceived as the leaders. President Hoopes attributes this tendency to cultural attitudes of dependency.

<sup>5</sup>President Joseph Fielding Smith, "To the Saints in Great Britain," *Ensign* 1 (September 1971): 3–4: "Thus the Church is not an American church except in America. . . . [I]n Great Britain it is a British church. . . . We expect our members everywhere to learn correct principles and to govern themselves . . . and stand as spiritual leaders in their nations" (originally delivered at Manchester England Area Conference, 27 August 1971).

<sup>6</sup>Loren C. Dunn, in Conference Report, Manchester England Area Conference 1971, 152.

<sup>7</sup>*History of the Church* 2:487–89.

<sup>8</sup>President Spencer W. Kimball, quoted by President Ezra Taft Benson at mission presidents' conference, Salt Lake City, 3 April 1985.

<sup>9</sup>A brochure with details of plans for the unified system is on file, along with related papers, with mission presidents' reports in Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. Reports of evolving development and progress were made regularly at mission presidents' seminars.



## Snowdrops at Ditchley Park

Beneath a February sky not yet  
prepared, though shifting cloud scenes, quite to open,  
here is the square-clipped beech-hedge,  
whose sere leaves, yet inhabitant, voice the wind  
with a noise of water talking to itself;  
here is the beech-tree planted by the Queen  
in nineteen-fifty-nine—it has done well  
for a tree planted after such a drought;  
here the contemplative pavilion;  
and now, where the formal path and the thick turf  
gave way to soil round the pavilion corner,  
here, as they were last year and years before,  
are the snowdrops  
(still in a lee of moss and leafmould—  
or else their buds are still too clenched to tremble—  
under a light net thrown of swaying shadows  
from ash and hazel saplings)—  
a myriad snowdrops (but not white like snow:  
not assertive enough for candor, not  
cold and crystalline, but cool and ivory  
veined with green) here as they always were,  
their regular indifference earth's ultimately  
most acceptable and truest welcome,  
its heart of charity:  
being themselves, waiting for me or anyone  
to turn the corner into grace.  
They stay;  
or rather,  
they will go and come again.  
Not I;  
this may well be the last time that I see them;  
or there will be a last time as for those—  
even—who live here now. And yet I hope  
(turning some seasonal corner when it comes,  
my turn to leave time when no time is left)  
to see the Galaxy not as Winter Street  
but like this bank of snowdrops;  
where deity may walk in the cool of the year,  
projecting spring.

—Arthur Henry King

# The Making of British Saints in Historical Perspective

Tim B. Heaton, Stan L. Albrecht, and J. Randal Johnson

## INTRODUCTION: THE EARLY MISSION

On 19 July 1837, Heber C. Kimball and his companions arrived in Liverpool to establish the British Mission. The personal and institutional costs of this mission were monumental. Separation from loved ones, illness, and poverty seemed the common lot for the missionaries. Staffing the mission took many of the most influential leaders at a time when the Church was struggling against financial crisis and the threat of internal disintegration in the United States. Subsequent events, however, proved the benefits were well worth the efforts devoted to the British Mission.

In the first six months after the first missionaries arrived, six hundred baptisms were reported.<sup>1</sup> This auspicious beginning was a harbinger of success for decades to come. (Reported numbers of baptisms and emigration from the British Mission are compared with growth in total Church membership in table 1.) The entire Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was called to serve in the mission between 1840 and 1841.<sup>2</sup> Although not all were able to fulfill this calling, a majority did so with phenomenal success. In the 1840s, British baptisms exceeded the total reported growth in Church membership, and in the 1850s, both baptisms and emigration exceeded reported growth in total Church membership.<sup>3</sup> By the middle 1850s, however, British baptisms and emigration began to decline until, by 1920, they were only a small fraction of the growth in a rapidly expanding Church. While not all of these figures can be taken at face value, they well illustrate the importance of the British Mission for continuity and growth of the Church. Without substantial infusion of new members, the losses from attrition and mortality could have threatened the very existence of the new religion.

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Tim B. Heaton is an associate professor of sociology at Brigham Young University; Stan L. Albrecht is dean of the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences and a professor of sociology; and J. Randal Johnson is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Washington. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association in Oxford, England, 7 July 1987. The authors express appreciation to Malcolm Thorp and Marie Cornwall for helpful comments.



TABLE 1  
British Baptisms, Emigration, and Growth  
in the Mormon Church: 1840–1919

| Time Period | British Mission Baptisms | British Mission Emigration | Growth in Church Membership |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1840–49     | 34,299                   | 5,784                      | 31,295                      |
| 1850–59     | 43,304                   | 12,355                     | 31,878                      |
| 1860–69     | 16,112                   | 9,924                      | 31,394                      |
| 1870–79     | 6,295                    | 6,913                      | 39,954                      |
| 1880–89     | 6,061                    | 8,219                      | 54,758                      |
| 1890–99     | 3,742                    | 4,849                      | 88,537                      |
| 1900–09     | 7,587                    | 3,195                      | 105,598                     |
| 1910–19     | 3,911                    | 892                        | 130,682                     |

Source: Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1937), 244–45.

In addition to supplying the large influx of new members, the British Mission produced many individuals who would play key leadership roles in the new religious movement. These included William Clayton, George Q. Cannon, B. H. Roberts, and James E. Talmage. Moreover, the *Millennial Star*, published in Britain, served an important role in codifying the doctrines and policies for the young organization. Thus, the British Mission provided spiritual and intellectual leadership to go along with new adherents.

But what has happened between this period of early dramatic growth and the contemporary Church in the British Isles? In this paper, we will attempt to address this important question. We will begin with a brief review of some of the social and economic conditions which, in combination with the characteristics of the missionary effort itself and the religious message of the missionaries, facilitated this early success. We will then discuss changes within British society and the LDS church which set the stage for a different pattern of conversion and Church growth in contemporary Britain.

#### CONVERSION IN THE EARLY BRITISH MISSION

The content, form, and spirit of the missionaries' message was well matched to social conditions of the time. The Industrial Revolution and associated rapid population growth, urbanization, and political reform created an atmosphere of social change. Religious revival and the emergence of new reform-oriented religious organizations reflected the flux in traditional values. Population mobility, occupational shifts, questioning of tradition, and transformations in the patterns of daily living weakened social ties and left a displaced population. This population appears to have been the major source of new converts.<sup>4</sup>

The Mormon message was well suited to this context. Lay clergy with a message of restoration of the simple gospel of Christ must have



offered assurance to a displaced segment of society. The unpretentious style of missionaries from laboring families would appeal to a similarly situated audience. Add to this the opportunity to emigrate and help build the kingdom of God and we have a message that matches many of the needs which must have been felt by potential converts.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the early British Mission is the pattern of selectivity regarding characteristics of converts. Accounts of the early mission suggest at least three aspects of selective conversion, including socioeconomic status, geographic location, and prior religious affiliation.

Apparently most early converts came from the lower and working classes.<sup>5</sup> Descriptions of new members tell a story of unemployment, hunger, and poverty. Members of the British nobility, aristocrats, and factory owners were rarely found among the congregation. Data on the occupational status of emigrants indicate that only 11 percent were middle-class and the largest single group (21 percent) were general laborers.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the new working classes found particular appeal in a religious movement led by missionaries from working-class origins who included in their message criticism of capitalist exploitation and the promise of a bright future associated with building a new Zion in America. Proselytizing methods such as street meetings and sermons in revival religious groups were also more likely to reach the working class who felt unattached from more established religions.

Proselytizing efforts were more successful in certain industrialized sections of the Midlands than in London, Scotland, or Ireland. Early efforts in London, the center of trade and political control, were very discouraging.<sup>7</sup> John Taylor opened the work in Ireland and subsequently other missionaries were assigned to continue; but efforts in Ireland were not very fruitful. Missionaries did establish a thriving group in Scotland, but this could not compare with the dramatic growth in the Midlands. A majority of converts were also from urban centers. In a country that was approximately half urban, 90 percent of Mormon emigrants originated in urban areas. Thus, urban centers of the industrial heartland provided the type of people who were most inclined to join the Church.<sup>8</sup>

Converts were also more likely to come from revivalist organizations than from the well-established and increasingly middle-class oriented mainline churches.<sup>9</sup> The United Brethren, in particular, were a major source of new members. In at least one case, an entire congregation simply changed affiliation. Apparently ministers from the more established groups offered substantial resistance to missionary efforts. In contrast, smaller, less-established groups even offered the missionaries the opportunity to preach in their services. Although a majority of converts had some degree of prior religious involvement, many of those with a religious background did not come from the Church of England.<sup>10</sup>



Other demographic characteristics suggest the British converts may have differed in additional ways. In the Manchester area, women outnumbered men, and a substantial percentage were single.<sup>11</sup> Taylor, however, notes a surprisingly even balance of males and females, and a greater representation of older people and children among Mormon emigrants than would normally be expected in a migrant population.<sup>12</sup> These latter statistics probably reflect the family orientation of the Church.

The centrality of emigration in the missionary message no doubt helps account for the dramatic success, as well as for the demographic characteristics, of converts. The Church-sponsored migration was remarkable in that the Church provided instructions on appropriate procedures, supervision of emigrant groups, and some financial support. In a materialistic vein, it might seem that missionaries used the migration system to entice potential members, while some people joined merely to receive assistance in emigration. Taylor, however, provides convincing argument that missionaries and converts alike were sincere in the motive to establish a religious community.<sup>13</sup>

High rates of conversion among working-class populations belonging to new religious movements in the geographic heart of the Industrial Revolution suggest that the Mormon message was particularly attractive to those who were less well integrated into British society. Lacking strong ties to existing organizations, such people were attracted to a gospel message which offered new meaning and a sense of belonging. These new converts then played a major role in establishing a Mormon society in the Rocky Mountains.

#### TRANSFORMATION OF THE CHURCH

Since the founding of the British Mission 150 years ago the Church has changed dramatically. Above-average fertility<sup>14</sup> and successful proselyting have propelled the obscure organization with six formal members to what is projected to be the next major world religion.<sup>15</sup> This growth along with broader social change has transformed the organizational structure of the Church. A bureaucratic structure has been created to manage the day-to-day business of building, keeping track of members, maintaining a substantial missionary force, informing local congregations of policies and programs, performing temple work for the living and the dead, and so on. Corresponding to this change, many of the features that were attractive to the first British converts are no longer as salient as they once were.

Part of the Church's success story includes acquisition of financial resources to cover the cost of its extensive programs. In fact, the appellation of *corporate empire* has even been applied.<sup>16</sup> Given the



modest assets of the Church in comparison with leading corporations and other major churches, as well as the nature of most activities which consume rather than produce income, the term *corporate empire* hardly seems appropriate. Nevertheless, the Church does stand in a very different financial position than it did in 1837. Some might even claim that free enterprise has been adopted as part of the ideology, though peaceful coexistence in diverse economic settings has required a position of neutrality with respect to the politics of economic regulation. The virtues of hard work and financial independence are extolled; the government dole and a something-for-nothing mentality are anathema; but it is now unusual to hear Church leaders make explicit statements regarding specific economic systems. In short, the critical comments against capitalism are no longer heard.

The current missionary message, in particular, is devoid of economic ideology. All missionaries learn a standardized message that focuses on the restoration of priesthood authority and prophetic guidance, the gospel of salvation through the Atonement of Christ, the scriptural authenticity of the Book of Mormon, and obedience to commandments of God. This message is the same in all countries. The sense of an imminent millennium has weakened. Gone is the program to assist immigration to a new land to build Zion and the corresponding opportunity for a new economic start in life. Rather, members are encouraged to stay where they are to build the local organization.

Even though this reformatted message may not be quite so compelling to one particular segment of the population, it probably has broader audience appeal. Those who are more established in the social order, who are not displaced by technological and social change, and who are not seeking new economic opportunities elsewhere will find this new approach more appealing.

Along with the shift in emphasis in the missionary message, there has also been a shift in the methods of contact. Street meetings and invitations to speak to congregations of other denominations are no longer operational. Door-to-door tracting and contacting friends and relatives of existing members are now the primary mechanisms for finding new converts. These approaches are probably less selective than the methods used by earlier missionaries. In particular, door-to-door tracting has the potential for contact with broad segments of society. Of course, there is a great deal of selectivity in terms of who will listen to the missionaries; but at least the initial contact is much more diversified.

In short, we think that changes in Church organization along with associated changes both in the emphasis placed on various aspects of the gospel message and in the methods used to disseminate this message have reduced the attractiveness to certain segments of society but have achieved a broader appeal. Thus, in comparing the contemporary British



experience with this earlier period of rapid growth, we might expect to find less selectivity in the types of people belonging to the Church.

#### CHANGES IN BRITISH SOCIETY

Just as broad social change has modified the nature of the LDS church, so has British society been transformed. Other social institutions have modified to accommodate the Industrial Revolution. Although unemployment continues to be a problem, and the decline of the British Empire has left the country in a disadvantaged economic position relative to other Western industrial societies, the large-scale adjustments required in the 1850s have not been repeated. The religious atmosphere in the British Isles changed in significant ways since the period of the 1830s and 1840s. While other factors might also be important, we will focus primarily on these two areas: the secularization of British society and the establishment of the British welfare state.

##### *The Secularization of British Society*

The early nineteenth century was a period of significant religious fervor in Britain. Cox notes that during this time the British people “either endured or entered into” a succession of religious crusades and missions that were designed to Christianize or re-Christianize the country.<sup>17</sup> While the relative success or failure of this movement is still debated by social historians, it is evident that “devotional sentiment and strictness of attention to religious services”<sup>18</sup> increased among the middle and upper classes, and the working-class poor were constantly being confronted with new forms of social Christianity. In other words, this was a period that literally “swarmed” with religious activity. Established, rationalistic denominations became more animated and new denominations appeared with frequency throughout the industrial area. Into this setting the early Mormon Apostles arrived and began to spread their message of restoration.<sup>19</sup>

The pattern of decline since that period, however, has been both dramatic and relatively constant. Following the 1850s came, first, what Cox calls the ethical revolt against Christian orthodoxy, followed by the Darwinian revolution in thought, both of which made “agnosticism respectable if not universal by the turn of the century.”<sup>20</sup> Religious institutions began to wither away to the point that by the early 1900s Arnold Bennett could say

I never hear discussion about religious faith now. Nobody in my acquaintance openly expresses the least concern about it. Churches are getting emptier. . . . The intelligentsia has sat back, shrugged its shoulders, given a sigh of relief, and decreed tacitly or by plain statement: “The affair is over and done with.”<sup>21</sup>



The continuing pattern of decline since the mid-nineteenth century is now well documented. While survey data for the United States show a steady or even increasing rate of attendance at weekly worship services, the opposite pattern is evident in Great Britain. Wilson notes that

the decline in attendance appears to have taken place in waves, first among the working class and later, in the twentieth century, among the middle class. The Church of England suffered the first losses; the decline of the Free Churches did not begin until the early twentieth century. Until very recently, Catholics maintained high rates of attendance, but lately there has been a marked decline; between 1955 and 1975 regular Mass attendance among the total Catholic population in England and Wales dropped from 76 percent to 32 percent.<sup>22</sup>

Gallup's study of religious attitudes and practices of young adults in the British Isles indicates that only about one in twenty even mentions religious activities when asked "How do you usually spend your weekends?" Similarly, fewer than 10 percent think religion should be very important in one's life. Approximately five times as many young Americans of the same age include religious activities in their weekend plans and feel that religion should be important.<sup>23</sup> Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi report that in 1970 only about 5 percent of the adult population in the Church of England even attend Easter religious services, and the percentage continues to decline.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, the churches in England are almost empty on an ordinary Sunday morning, and religion no longer seems to be a matter of much import to the average Britisher. As Cox notes, "Books about recent history usually fail to mention it altogether, and the subject of religion often provokes boredom. The churches are regarded as quaint and harmless but peripheral institutions."<sup>25</sup>

The most widely-used explanation to account for the decline in British religiosity is the sociological theory of secularization. Although scholars continue to debate the usefulness of this theory, no one has come up with a more acceptable alternative. Secularization theory is based on the general assumption that the related forces of modernization, urbanization, industrialization, and the rationalization of thought contributed to a decline in both religious values and religious institutions. While the concept of secularization is used in many different ways, it basically refers to three related processes: (1) a decline in religion as a major social force in society, (2) a transposition from sacred to secular explanations of events, and (3) an increasing frequency with which individuals look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of a religious interpretation. Faith in reason—with its empirical, pragmatic orientation to the world—replaces faith in revelation and religious tradition.

These forces were clearly evident in the Britain of the last half of the nineteenth century. It cannot be accepted as totally conclusive



whether their presence is the major determinant of the decline in religion, but the outcome has been a society that now stands out among all modern nations in the degree to which its people are unchurched.

Arrival of the Mormon Apostles in England during a time of great religious agitation was certainly fortuitous. In this setting, the message of the restored gospel rang true to many who were seeking and were willing to listen. The dramatic downturn in both numbers of British converts and immigrants that begins in the middle 1850s closely follows the pattern of downturn in religious activity in British society more generally. By the last few decades of the century when convert baptisms had fallen from highs of over eight thousand per year to two or three hundred, religious activity among the British populace had also fallen dramatically. Thus, while forces having to do with the Church in America may have been important in this dramatic downturn, the missionary work was certainly not unaffected by forces that were also operating in British society.

#### *The Creation of the British Welfare State*

The creation of a welfare state has also helped to ameliorate deprivations that were experienced in the nineteenth century. Health care and other forms of public assistance have established a minimum level of subsistence for a vast majority of the population. Indeed, this minimum level of assistance exceeds any type of long-term economic opportunity that could be provided by the LDS church. The economic incentives to join the Church are no longer a major attraction.

This is not to imply that people join the Church for purely economic reasons. Rather, in a period of economic insecurity, a religion which offered as part of its program new economic opportunities would be more attractive in areas where deprivation was high. People whose basic needs are taken care of feel less need to search for a better life.

In 1837 governmental welfare policies were very different from the present day. Intervention on behalf of the poverty-stricken was solely in the form of the Poor Laws—a work-release program which had not been significantly revised in two hundred years. This “relief” was comprised of converted storage facilities where able-bodied poor who needed assistance were sent to work for the barest minimum wages. These workhouses were feared and despised by all working classes because of the desperate conditions inside them—conditions which were a favorite subject of contemporary authors such as Charles Dickens.

The government held the opinion that noninterference with private enterprise—or laissez-faire capitalism—was not only in the best interest of the public at large, but that it was also in agreement with the decrees of God. Victorian British society considered poverty a state ordained by



Deity.<sup>26</sup> Poverty was readily distinguished from pauperism and only the latter was regarded as a social problem which demanded attention from the government.<sup>27</sup> Religious leaders preached the doctrine of economic stratification from the pulpit. An excerpt from Wilberforce's *Practical View of the System of Christianity* states their position well:

[The] more lowly path [of the poor] has been allotted them by the hand of God; . . . it is their part faithfully to discharge its duties and contentedly to bear its inconveniences; . . . the present state of things is short; . . . the objects about which worldly men conflict so eagerly are not worth the contest; . . . the peace of mind which Religion offers indiscriminately to all ranks affords more true satisfaction than all the expensive pleasures that are beyond the poor man's reach.<sup>28</sup>

Another widely-held public attitude conveyed that poverty was the result of a flawed character.<sup>29</sup> Although Darwin's theories on the evolution of species would not be published for another twenty-two years, by the time the first LDS missionaries landed, the seeds of his concept of "natural selection" were appearing in British social thought. Poverty implied moral incapacity. The most general attitude held that those who were able to develop the self-help mentality would "free [themselves] from the thralldom of poverty."<sup>30</sup> Those who could not were left to fend for themselves as best they could, while the prosperous were deemed worthy of their station and were praised for their moral stability and strength.

Living conditions for the working-class poor were dismal. Enclosure of private lands for the raising of sheep, along with increased inflation due to the importing of precious metals from the Americas, had forced thousands to move to the urban areas. Such rapid growth posed enormous problems of housing and sanitation.<sup>31</sup> At first, cellars, attics, and any unused space was converted to apartments. Soon after, sprawling public housing tracts were built around the factories. Adequate and sanitary water supplies or facilities were practically nonexistent. Local rivers and streams served as both water supply and sewer.<sup>32</sup>

Overcrowding, disease, and pestilence were the common lot of the urban slum dweller.<sup>33</sup> Free education was to be had only if you were a cadet, a pauper, or a felon. Military academies, workhouses, and prisons provided some formal education, but unless you worked in a factory which provided schooling to its employees, education was a privilege reserved for those who could afford to pay for it.<sup>34</sup> Unemployment always loomed on the horizon. The labor pool was so vast that factory owners could (and did) pay the barest minimum wages.<sup>35</sup> Any labor conflict was resolved by replacing troublemakers with those who were eagerly awaiting a chance at a job. Even the slightest tremor in market conditions could send a wave of layoffs through an entire community.



Social reform was a topic of interest to the middle class who had been created as a by-product of the Industrial Revolution.<sup>36</sup> Political parity between the land-endowed aristocracy and the industrial middle class was largely achieved through the lobbying efforts of the Anti-Corn Law League and the subsequent repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. The interests and the influence of the industrialists became more established in the legislative body of British government.<sup>37</sup> Various social movements and related legislation in the last half of the nineteenth century were designed to improve social conditions, but these efforts were largely unorganized, ad hoc, and piecemeal. The major areas of improvement came from education, medical treatment, housing, health, and sanitation.

Legislation of a state-sponsored education program was delayed because of the great debates between the representatives of the church and the Government.<sup>38</sup> Slowly, the church's influence diminished. The Department of Education was organized in 1856. Various acts of Parliament reduced attendance fees and made parents responsible for their children's attendance at school, resulting in an 18 percent increase in enrollment from 1862 to 1866. In 1869 the National Education League was formed as a lobbying organization for public education, and the Education Act of 1870 provided for the "right of every child to some form of schooling."<sup>39</sup>

State-supported health care was minimal. The Poor Law workhouses provided an excellent location for infirmaries, and by 1861, 80 percent of all hospital beds were in workhouse wards.<sup>40</sup> The Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867—regarded by most as the start of an efficient state medical service—provided for the building of many specialist hospitals along with an ambulance service in the capital. Many public infirmaries and dispensaries were constructed in the 1870s and 1880s.

Although there was a lag in legislation on housing improvements, with the enfranchisement of the rural workers in 1884 such legislation was quick in coming. From that time until the turn of the century, acts aimed at establishing a standard of acceptable housing were passed, and the general reform experienced earlier by medical treatment and education was joined by the housing industry.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the greatest progress was made in health and sanitation. In Manchester, by 1858, there were ten local acts designed to improve the Health Corporation. In 1846, Liverpool had elected the first Medical Officer of Health. In 1852 the Leeds Waterworks Act organized the first fully municipal water supply. Between 1858 and 1872 many local and general sanitation, sewage, and disease prevention acts were passed which further solidified the powers of the municipal water supplies and health and sanitation departments. Finally, in 1875, with the passage of



the Public Health Act, the implementation of a national public health system was accomplished.<sup>42</sup>

There is no clear consensus on exactly what constitutes a welfare state; however, in Great Britain it is generally described in terms of implementing several acts of Parliament, all of which became effective on 5 July 1948. These acts (the National Insurance Act, National Assistance Act, and the National Health Services Act) were designed as a “social security network which protected everyone from destitution or want.”<sup>43</sup> Under this system, “the whole population was provided for in times of loss or interruption of earnings . . . , in times of exceptional family expenditure, . . . and on the death of the breadwinner.”<sup>44</sup> Each of these pieces of legislation was designed to provide relief for unexpected circumstances.

The urban laborers of Great Britain in the nineteenth century represent a unique group. This body of working-class people—displaced from their rural homes, earning barely enough to survive, living in cramped, unsanitary conditions—were forced to work twelve to fourteen hours per day. If the father died or was incapacitated because of illness or injury, the family was faced with the public workhouses.<sup>45</sup> The urban laborers undoubtedly felt separated and restricted from becoming like those middle-class people who managed the factories and owned the shops in town. The laborers were ripe for new ideas, both political and religious. Social legislation in the nineteenth century was probably not sufficient to make dramatic change in working conditions. The cumulative effect of reform—much occurring in this century—has, however, created a very different context for contemporary missionary efforts.

In sum, social change in British society has reduced the number of people who may be interested in joining a new religious group. This diminution of potential audience coupled with above noted changes in the LDS church have created a very different context for missionary work in the 1980s.

#### CONTEMPORARY CHURCH GROWTH AND SELECTIVITY

British membership growth over the last fifty years is shown in table 2. Convert baptisms and associated growth remained low until the 1960s. There was a large spurt of baptisms in the early 1960s, with a continued higher number in the 1970s and early 1980s. According to the 1987 *Church Almanac*, LDS membership totaled 130,500 in Ireland and Great Britain. This figure is 2 percent of the worldwide LDS membership, but only .02 percent of the total population of the United Kingdom.<sup>46</sup> In the 1980s the British membership is growing at an annual rate of 2.5 percent. This is substantially lower than the LDS total rate of growth of 4.9 percent per year but is still a respectable rate of growth implying



TABLE 2  
Membership and Convert Baptisms in the British Isles: 1937–85

| Period  | Convert Baptisms | End of Period Membership |
|---------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1937–49 | 1,290            | 6,457                    |
| 1950–59 | 6,739            | 19,332                   |
| 1960–69 | 57,638           | 85,217                   |
| 1970–79 | 38,230           | 114,558                  |
| 1980–85 | 28,838           | 132,810                  |

Source: Derek A. Cuthbert, *The Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 197–98.

a doubling of population every twenty-eight years. The absolute growth in this two-year period is 18,252 persons. This growth is greater than the number of baptisms during most years of the nineteenth century; but, of course, the base population of the Church and the country is much larger, as is the missionary force. Thus, although the rate of growth of the LDS Church in Britain is quite high, the influence of the British membership on total Church membership is very small.

The diminished influence of British Saints can also be seen by examining the national origins of General Authorities. Even though the number of General Authorities has grown substantially, only one current member of the group was born in Great Britain. Nor can Britain lay claim to any publications comparable to the *Millennial Star* in influence.

Part of Britain's reduced influence is obviously a result of the massive early emigration which served to establish the core of the Church in the United States. In addition, the missionary effort has been very successful in many other countries since World War II. Mexico now has more than double the membership of Britain, and the Philippines will soon surpass Great Britain to become the largest LDS population outside the American continents. Nevertheless, the major reason for the decline is that the baptism rate (based on either the LDS or the total national population) is very small in comparison with the mid-nineteenth century.

Comparison of demographic characteristics of British Saints with the national population (see table 3) also suggests that the degree of selectivity in terms of who belongs to the Church is not as great as it once was. The LDS population is disproportionately young, female, and white. There are more one-person households in the LDS population, but also more large households. Marital status for the national and LDS populations is similar, with the exception that there is a higher percentage of divorced persons in the LDS population. Family size is larger in the LDS population. These differences are generally consistent with the family orientation of the Church (divorce being the exception) and the notion that younger people are more likely to change religious status.<sup>47</sup>

TABLE 3  
Sociodemographic Characteristics of British Mormons and the Population of Britain

|  |                                   | Great Britain | British LDS |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Percent of population aged 0–29                                |                                   | 43            | 53          |
| Percent of population aged 65 or over                          |                                   | 15            | 5           |
| Males per one hundred females                                  |                                   | 95            | 92          |
| Percent nonwhite   |                                   | 4.5           | 2.9         |
| Percent one-person households                                  |                                   | 22.0          | 27.0        |
| Percent households with six or more persons                    |                                   | 4.0           | 8.3         |
| Average household size   |                                   | 2.7           | 2.8         |
| Percent married:   | male                              | 67.0          | 66.3        |
|  | female                            | 61.8          | 59.7        |
| Percent divorced:  | male                              | 2.9           | 7.6         |
|  | female                            | 3.5           | 9.4         |
| Percent never married:   | male                              | 26.4          | 24.8        |
|  | female                            | 20.0          | 22.2        |
| Average number of children (for women married between 1955–59) |                                   | 2.4           | 3.2         |
| Percent of families with three or more children                |                                   | 9.0           | 20.0        |
| Percent with postsecondary education:                          | male                              | 16.0          | 17.0        |
|  | female                            | 10.0          | 12.0        |
| Percent employed:  | male                              | 80.0          | 70.0        |
|  | female                            | 58.0          | 40.0        |
| Percent unemployed:  | male                              | 10.0          | 13.0        |
|  | female                            | 6.0           | 8.0         |
| Percent in occupation groups (males):                          | higher-grade professional         | 14.3          | 19.0        |
|  | lower-grade professional          | 12.1          | 10.3        |
|  | clerical-sales                    | 9.6           | 20.7        |
|  | small proprietors                 | 8.0           | 1.8         |
|  | lower-grade technicians           | 12.0          | 3.1         |
|  | skilled manual                    | 22.0          | 34.5        |
|  | laborers                          | 21.8          | 10.5        |
| Percent in income groups (in pounds):                          | 1–4,999                           | 64.2          | 63.6        |
|  | 5,000–9,999                       | 31.5          | 33.1        |
|  | 10,000 or more                    | 4.3           | 3.3         |
| Percent convert baptisms                                       |                                   |               | 79.7        |
| Percent of church membership (before conversion to Mormonism): |                                   |               |             |
|  | Church of England, Scotland, etc. | 57.0          | 52.3        |
|  | Other Protestant                  | 18.8          | 19.1        |
|  | Catholic                          | 13.0          | 11.4        |
|  | Jewish                            | .8            | .5          |
|  | Non-Christian                     | 2.7           | .1          |
|  | None                              | 7.7           | 16.7        |



Turning to socioeconomic status, education and occupational status of the LDS population are somewhat above the national average; but the income distribution is similar, and unemployment is higher. There is little evidence here that those of lower status are particularly involved in the Church, and some evidence to the contrary.

Interestingly, a large majority of the British Saints are convert baptisms. There has not been a substantial buildup of second or third generation Mormons with a long tradition of Church experience and culture. Moreover, converts come from religious backgrounds that match the national population, with the exception that a disproportionate number of converts had no religious preference prior to conversion; 57 percent of the national population belong to the major national denomination (that is, Church of England or Scotland), compared to 52 percent of converts. Thus, there is little selectivity of converts from unusual religious groups.

In sum, LDS members are representative of the national population in many respects. The patterns of selectivity that marked dramatic Church growth in the nineteenth century are no longer present.

#### CONCLUSION

We have outlined changes in the social and religious conditions associated with LDS membership growth in Britain in very broad strokes. It is interesting to compare these changes with the Stark-Bainbridge theory of religious movements.<sup>48</sup> The emergence of a new religious group in a era of rapid social change and patterns of selectivity of early converts is consistent with their model. As the Church has improved its economic position, Stark and Bainbridge would also predict a decline in the selectivity of membership. On close inspection, however, the Stark-Bainbridge model does not fit in some important respects.

Religion, according to Stark and Bainbridge, is attractive because it can promise rewards that are not attainable by other means.<sup>49</sup> People who cannot obtain worldly goods provided by the economic system will be most attracted to new religious movements, and the new religions, in turn, emphasize supernatural compensation for religious behavior. As upward mobility improves the ability of members to obtain a greater share of worldly rewards, characteristics of the members become less distinctive, and less emphasis is placed on supernatural benefits. Contrary to this model, the early Church apparently placed more emphasis on opportunity for economic advancement through emigration to the United States, whereas the current missionary message places more on obtaining salvation by conformity to religious principles. Of course, socioeconomic achievement may be emphasized in many subtle ways in the contemporary Church, but this is the topic for another paper. The



main point is that the early Church was, in contrast to the Stark-Bainbridge model, able to combine a religious message of salvation and an imminent millennial transformation with the opportunity for improvement in economic circumstances. Perhaps this relatively unique combination helps explain success of the early missionary effort.

The Stark-Bainbridge model also fits better in the United States where religious affiliation and participation is quite common. Current low levels of religious involvement in Britain suggest that a society may be able to get by without a religious answer to existential questions about the human condition. If it can, LDS missionary efforts may fall upon rocky or dry soil. On the other hand, if Mormon theology can provide new meaning, current rapid growth may be a harbinger of things to come.

At this point, a cautionary note of explanation is in order. We have outlined important social conditions in British society and within the Church which set the context within which conversion occurs. This context alone cannot predict precisely who or how many will join the Church. For example, our description of membership selectivity and the match between the missionary message and British social conditions might lead to the prediction that millions would have joined the Church and emigrated in the 1850s and 1860s. That millions did not clearly demonstrates the limitations of our approach. The spiritual nature of conversion lies beyond the scope of the perspective we offer here. We do feel, however, that prevailing social conditions play an important role in how many and which types of people seek out and join new religions.

In retrospect, it seems remarkable that Joseph Smith would call some of his most talented leadership away to Britain at a time when the Church was struggling for survival in the United States. It is even more remarkable that the missionaries were called at a time when social conditions were ripe for missionary success in Britain. If the mission calls would have been delayed another twenty years, it may have been too late to reap such success. It is even questionable whether the Church could have survived the twenty years with enough strength to send missionaries, lacking the added strength of the British converts. The mission call and the heroic efforts of the missionaries appear to have come at just the right time.

One can only imagine what the Church would be like had it not been for the large number of converts who were baptized in Britain and immigrated to Utah. But Britain no longer plays the role as a major source of growth. Rather, it is comparable to several other mission field or peripheral countries that form the satellites of an internationally expanding church. While we study and celebrate the important role Britain once played, we should also be sensitive to the role and problems which it and similar countries face as small segments of a rapidly growing church centered in the Mountain West of the United States.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain* (1937; reprint, Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1984), 244.

<sup>2</sup>James B. Allen and Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Classes," *Brigham Young University Studies* 15 (Summer 1975): 500.

<sup>3</sup>This logical impossibility serves as a caution against overinterpretation of statistics; but the high baptism rate also shows how important British conversion was.

<sup>4</sup>Ronald W. Walker, "Cradling Mormonism: The Rise of the Gospel in Early Victorian England," *BYU Studies* 27 (Winter 1987): 25–29; see also Phillip A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of Their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 148–57.

<sup>5</sup>Allen and Thorp, "Apostles and the Working Classes," 513; Walker, "Cradling Mormonism," 29.

<sup>6</sup>Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 150.

<sup>7</sup>See chap. 19 of Evans, *Century of "Mormonism"*; see also Allen and Thorp, "Apostles and the Working Classes," 509–10.

<sup>8</sup>Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 149 and appendix for local origins of emigrants, 248–49.

<sup>9</sup>Grant Underwood, "The Religious Milieu of British Mormonism" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, Oxford, England, 7 July 1987).

<sup>10</sup>James B. Allen and Thomas G. Alexander, *Manchester Mormons: The Journal of William Clayton*, vol. 1 of *Classic Mormon Diary Series* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1974), 21.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>12</sup>Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 146.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 151–54.

<sup>14</sup>Geraldine P. Mineau, Lee L. Bean, and Mark Skolnik, "Mormon Demographic History II: The Family Life Cycle and Natural Fertility," *Population Studies* 33 (Fall 1979): 432.

<sup>15</sup>Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26 (September 1984) 18.

<sup>16</sup>See John Heinerman and Anson Shupe, *The Mormon Corporate Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

<sup>17</sup>Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>19</sup>Underwood, "The Religious Milieu," 1.

<sup>20</sup>Cox, *Churches in a Secular Society*, 7.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>22</sup>John Wilson, *Religion in American Society* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 401.

<sup>23</sup>Princeton Religious Research Center, *Religion in America* (December 1981): 39.

<sup>24</sup>Michael Argyle and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Social Psychology of Religion* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 9.

<sup>25</sup>Cox, *Churches in a Secular Society*, 3.

<sup>26</sup>John W. Bower and John L. Brooks, *The Victorian Age: Prose, Poetry, and Drama*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1954), 3–11.

<sup>27</sup>Michael E. Rose, *The English Poor Law: 1780–1930* (New Abbot, England: David and Charles, 1971), 47–48.

<sup>28</sup>Bower and Brooks, *Victorian Age*, 11.

<sup>29</sup>Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution* (London: McMillan Press, 1976), 119.

<sup>30</sup>Fraser, *Welfare State*, 119.

<sup>31</sup>John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing: 1815–1970* (New Abbot, England: David and Charles, 1978), 54–58.

<sup>32</sup>M. C. Buer, *Health, Wealth and Population in the Early Days of the Industrial Revolution* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), 108–10.

<sup>33</sup>Burnett, *History of Housing*, 58–91; Buer, *Health, Wealth and Population*, 226–27.

<sup>34</sup>Fraser, *Welfare State*, 72.

<sup>35</sup>Rose, *English Poor Law*, 30–33.

<sup>36</sup>Sima Lieberman, *Europe and the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1972), 343; Fraser, *Welfare State*, 6–9, 106–7.

<sup>37</sup>See chap. 5 of Fraser, *Welfare State*.

<sup>38</sup>See chap. 4 of *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>Fraser, *Welfare State*, 79.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>41</sup>Burnett, *History of Housing*, 175–83.

<sup>42</sup>Fraser, *Welfare State*, 70–71.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 15–30, 49–50.

<sup>46</sup>*Deseret News 1987 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1986), 256.

<sup>47</sup>These figures are based on members who could be contacted and were willing to respond. They may not be representative of the entire membership or of recent converts. The numbers, however, do reflect members that the Church is able to locate and who will reply to requests for information.

<sup>48</sup>See chap. 19 of Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>49</sup>Stark and Bainbridge, *Future of Religion*, 6–9.



## Afterwords

Dear Editor:

Mary Jane Fritzen, of Idaho Falls, has called my attention to an error in “The Legislative Antipolygamy Campaign” (*BYU Studies* 26 [Fall 1986]: 118). On 2 November 1982, the voters of Idaho approved HJR 7, an amendment to the state constitution that repealed the language disfranchising believers in “patriarchal or celestial marriage.” Polygamy remains illegal.

Richard D. Poll



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