

Coming and Going to Zion

An Analysis of Push and Pull Factors Motivating British Latter-day Saint Emigration, 1840–60

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In 1863, acclaimed British writer Charles Dickens boarded a New York-bound emigrant ship docked at Liverpool. He was not a passenger but an observer; the subjects of his study were more than eight hundred Latter-day Saint emigrants aboard the ship *Amazon*. Dickens's stated purpose, as he later wrote in *The Uncommercial Traveller*, was "to bear testimony against them if they deserved it," but to his surprise, he instead found "the pick and flower of England."¹ Dickens lauded the Latter-day Saints' politeness and their "aptitude for organisation," and he praised their leader, Apostle George Q. Cannon. By the end of his visit, Dickens found it "impossible to deny that, so far, some remarkable influence had produced a remarkable result, which better known influences have often missed."²

But Dickens—and countless other observers of nineteenth-century British Latter-day Saint emigrants—found some difficulty in describing *why* these people left their homeland to gather in the New World. Indeed, Dickens evaded the question entirely. This Latter-day Saint

1. Dickens's analysis was correct, as passengers aboard the *Amazon* would go on to be respected vocalists, newspaper editors, business and community leaders, and one U.S. Supreme Court justice. See Richard L. Jensen and Gordon Irving, "The Voyage of the Amazon: A Close View of One Immigrant Company," *Ensign* 10, no. 3 (March 1980): 16–19.

2. Charles Dickens, "Bound for the Great Salt Lake," in *The Uncommercial Traveller and Reprinted Pieces* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 232, 224, 228, 228. For a more complete exploration of Dickens's interactions with Mormonism in the preceding decades and his subtle shifts in perspective on religious minority groups, see Richard J. Dunn, "Dickens and the Mormons," *BYU Studies* 8, no. 3 (1967–68): 325–34.

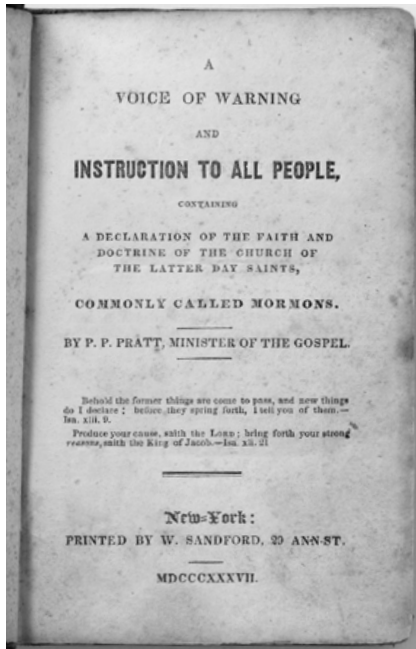


FIGURE 1. Parley P. Pratt's *A Voice of Warning* was the most widely read and shared missionary tract during the half-century following its publication. Photograph courtesy of Church History Library.

movement “was, taken all in all, the most successful example of regulated immigration in United States history,” one twentieth-century historian wrote.³ Existing literature contextualizes this emigration within its economic and social framework, but to date, there exists no sociological analysis of migratory motive focused on the first two decades of British Latter-day Saint emigration alone.

This article consults diaries, autobiographies, and letters written by fifty emigrants. They are housed in several locations, including Brigham Young University's Saints by Sea database,⁴ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' History Library, FamilySearch digital records, local collections in England, and published volumes. To identify

any correlating themes between the writings of the emigrants and the message originating from Latter-day Saint leaders, the accounts are frequently compared with the writings of contemporary missionaries, especially Parley P. Pratt, whose *A Voice of Warning* (fig. 1) was the preeminent missionary tract of the age.⁵ *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, the

3. Katharine Coman, *Economic Beginnings of the Far West*, 2 vols. (New York: MacMillan, 1912), 2:184.

4. Saints by Sea: Latter-day Saint Immigration to America, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu>.

5. *A Voice of Warning*, a catalytic 216-page tract written by Elder Parley P. Pratt, published in 1837, had a profound impact on many Latter-day Saint conversions. Pratt's biographers, Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, argue that from the time *A Voice of Warning* was published, it “served the church as its most powerful proselytizing tool—after the Book of Mormon—for more than a century.” It was eventually printed in over thirty English-language editions. See Terry L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 90, 103, 119; see also Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People, Containing*

Church's British-focused newspaper published from 1840 to 1970, is also referenced frequently.

In an attempt to identify emigrant motives within a sociological framework of push and pull factors,⁶ I discovered a strong link between the spiritual and temporal motives of the emigrants, encapsulated by their millenarian belief that Christ's return was at hand.⁷ The first section briefly reviews the existing literature on religious emigration from Britain during the mid-nineteenth century, with a particular emphasis on historical accounts and analysis of Latter-day Saint emigration. The second outlines my methodology in selecting and analyzing emigrant accounts. The following section lays out my findings, organized by three central themes: economic factors, revelatory factors, and the doctrine of "gathering." For the British Latter-day Saint of the nineteenth century, nearly all motives for emigration—whether economic, social, or religious—could be tethered back to an apocalyptic belief and understanding that their emigration was a necessary part of end-of-times prophecy.⁸

Literature Review

Among nineteenth-century movements from Britain, the Latter-day Saint emigration was "the only successful, privately organized emigration system of the period," as one observer wrote.⁹ Historians, from both

a Declaration of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter-day Saints, Commonly Called Mormons (New York: Sandford, 1837).

6. For further exploration of the push- and pull-factor sociological theories of migration, see Douglas S. Massey and others, "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal," *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 3 (September 1993): 431–66.

7. This belief stemmed from Joseph Smith's early teachings. Five months after the Church was organized in April 1830, Smith received a revelation in which he was commanded to "bring to pass the gathering of mine elect" and gave a specific purpose for this gathering: "Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked" (D&C 29:7–8). In January 1831, another revelation gave additional reasons for gathering, including building a community with the righteous, escaping "the enemy," and receiving heavenly power: "And that ye might escape the power of the enemy [and Babylon], and be gathered unto me a righteous people, without spot and blameless—wherefore, for this cause I gave unto you the a commandment that ye should go to the Ohio [or other gathering places]; and there I will give unto you my law [consecration]; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high" (D&C 38:31–32).

8. Hence the periodical's title: the *Millennial Star*.

9. W. S. Shepperson, *British Emigration to North America: Projects and Opinions in the Early Victorian Period* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 143.

within and without the Latter-day Saint tradition, have taken a keen interest in the early Church history in Great Britain. Volumes exist on the activities of early Latter-day Saint missionaries to the British Isles, their converts, and the subsequent emigration of those converts.

The Conversion of the British Saints

Latter-day Saints first arrived in England in 1837 and enjoyed massive success.¹⁰ In *The Latter-day Saint Gathering*, Fred E. Woods notes that by 1850, there were “more Latter-day Saint converts in the British Isles than there were in all of North America, including Utah.”¹¹ The emigration of Latter-day Saint converts to North America began a decade earlier, in 1840, when John Moon led a group on the ship *Britannia* from Liverpool to New York.¹² For the next fifty years, more than

10. For an overview of the first Latter-day Saint missionary activity in Great Britain, see James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992); 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); V. Ben Bloxham, “The Call of the Apostles to the British Isles” and “The Apostolic Foundations, 1840–41,” in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987*, ed. V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter (Cambridge, Eng.: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 104–62; Robert L. Lively Jr., “Some Sociological Reflections on the Nineteenth-Century British Mission,” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, ed. Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm R. Thorp (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 16–30; Ronald K. Esplin, “The 1840–41 Mission to England and the Development of the Quorum of the Twelve,” in Jensen and Thorp, *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 70–91; Arnold K. Garr, “George A. Smith’s Mission with the Twelve in England, 1839–41,” in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The British Isles*, ed. Cynthia Doxey and others (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), 21–40; Clyde J. Williams, “‘More Value . . . Than All the Gold and Silver of England’: The Book of Mormon in Britain, 1837–52,” in Doxey and others, *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The British Isles*, 79–108; James B. Allen and Malcolm R. Thorp, “The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Class,” *BYU Studies* 15, no. 4 (1975): 499–526; Fred E. Woods, “A Gifted Gentleman in Perpetual Motion: John Taylor as an Emigration Agent,” in *John Taylor, Champion of Liberty*, Brigham Young University Church History Symposium, ed. Mary Jane Woodger (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 171–91.

11. Fred E. Woods, “Introduction: The Latter-day Saint Gathering,” in *Liverpool to Great Salt Lake*, ed. Ronald G. Watt and LaJean Purcell Carruth (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022), xx.

12. For an account of the *Britannia*, see James Allen, “‘We Had a Very Hard Voyage for the Season’: John Moon’s Account of the First Emigrant Company of British Saints,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 3 (1976–77): 339–41.

four hundred additional ships would follow,¹³ and emigration became increasingly systematized, with Liverpool—then the most active port in Europe—serving as headquarters for departures and a hub for organization. Meanwhile, robust missionary work continued throughout England,¹⁴ Wales,¹⁵ and Scotland.¹⁶

Historians have documented a series of events—both in England and in North America—that influenced the Latter-day Saint emigration over the next two decades.¹⁷ In 1842, Great Britain implemented the Passenger Act,¹⁸ a law governing the treatment of emigrants on British-origin ships by introducing standards for passengers' food, medicine, and lodging.¹⁹ The law raised the price of emigration, increasing the

13. See Fred E. Woods, "The Tide of Mormon Migration Flowing through the Port of Liverpool, England," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 1 (2008): 67.

14. For early Church history in the Three Counties area in England (Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, and Worcestershire), see Carol Wilkinson and Cynthia Doxey Green, *The Field Is White: Harvest in the Three Counties of England* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2017). For history in Cambridgeshire, see Leonard Reed, *Living Latter-day Saint History in Cambridgeshire* (self-pub., 2007). For history in Lancashire, see David M. W. Pickup, *The Pick and Flower of England: The Illustrated Story of the Mormons in Victorian England and The Story of the Preston Temple*, 3rd revised, enlarged, and illustrated ed. (Lancashire, U.K.: Living Legend, 1997). For history in Staffordshire, see Stephen G. Arrowsmith, "The 'Unidentified Pioneers': An Analysis of Staffordshire Mormons, 1837 to 1870" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2003).

15. Ronald D. Dennis, "The Welsh and the Gospel," in Bloxham, Moss, and Porter, *Truth Will Prevail*, 236–67.

16. Frederick S. Buchanan, "The Ebb and Flow of the Church in Scotland," in Bloxham, Moss, and Porter, *Truth Will Prevail*, 268–98; Fred E. Woods, "Conveyance and Contribution: Mormon Scots Gather to an American Zion," *History Scotland* 5, no. 4 (July/August 2005): 48–54; Fred E. Woods, "Conveyance and Contribution: Mormon Scots Gather to an American Zion (Part II)," *History Scotland* 5, no. 5 (September/October 2005): 37–42; Bernard Aspinwall, "A Fertile Field: Scotland in the Days of the Early Missions," in Jensen and Thorp, *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 104–17; Frederick S. Buchanan, "Scots among the Mormons," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Fall 1968): 328–52; Frederick Buchanan, "The Emigration of Scottish Mormons to Utah, 1849–1900" (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1961).

17. Significant levels of Latter-day Saint emigration persisted until the 1890s, though my study focuses only on the first two decades of emigration.

18. Ray Jay Davis, "Law and the Nineteenth-Century British Mormon Migration," in Jensen and Thorp, *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 243–57; Fred E. Woods, *Gathering to Nauvoo* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2002), 54–57.

19. It is worth noting that another Passenger Act was passed in 1855, and while it was being crafted, the House of Commons invited Samuel W. Richards, on behalf of the Church, to testify before a select committee about the Latter-day Saint migration system. The *Morning Advertiser* wrote, "[Richards] gave himself no airs but was so respectful in his demeanour, and ready in his answers, that, at the close of his examination he received

Latter-day Saints' need for a systematized, efficient program. Between 1840 and 1846, most Latter-day Saint emigrants migrated to Nauvoo, Illinois, where the Church was headquartered.²⁰ In 1846, Latter-day Saints were expelled from Illinois and pushed farther west, and the British emigration was paused. By 1848, British emigrants resumed their migrations, which now included cross-continental travel (usually by foot) to the Utah territory in addition to the sea voyage. In 1849, Church leader Brigham Young implemented the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF), a loan program that facilitated the cross-Atlantic and overland travel of Latter-day Saint emigrants from Great Britain and other countries.²¹ The so-called Utah War, a prolonged conflict between the U.S. government and settlers in Utah Territory, began in 1857, causing a recall of nearly all American missionaries from Great Britain and slowing the emigration process once again.²²

The Emigration of British Latter-day Saints

For decades, the chief historical writing on nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint emigration from Great Britain to the United States was that of Phillip A. M. Taylor. His 1954 article "Why Did British Mormons Migrate?" and his 1965 book, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of Their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century*, both chronicle the mass movement of this group from 1840 until the mid-1890s and explore the factors that may have motivated its migration. Both works are irreplaceable in their exploration of the economic factors that may have pushed emigrants away from Great Britain and the unique messaging employed by Latter-day Saint emissaries from

the thanks of the committee in rather a marked manner." See Frederick Piercy, *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley* (Liverpool: Franklin D. Richards, 1855), 18.

20. See Woods, *Gathering to Nauvoo*; Fred E. Woods, "Gathering to Nauvoo: Mormon Immigration 1840–46," *Nauvoo Journal* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 43–63. For further explorations of British emigration during the Nauvoo period, see James B. Allen, "To the Saints in England: Impressions of a Mormon Immigrant (the 10 December 1840 William Clayton Letter from Nauvoo to Manchester)," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 3 (1978): 475–80; Richard L. Jensen, "Transplanted to Zion: The Impact of British Latter-day Saint Immigration upon Nauvoo," *BYU Studies* 31, no. 1 (1991): 76–87; and Fred E. Woods, "The Gathering of the British Saints" in *Joseph: Exploring the Life and Ministry of the Prophet*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Andrew C. Skinner (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 331–39.

21. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900*, new ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005): 97–108.

22. Richard D. Poll, "The British Mission during the Utah War, 1857–58," in Jensen and Thorp, *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 224–42.

North America. Where Taylor's work leaves an opportunity for further research is the absence of emigrants' writings as a primary source for gauging motive. In his 1954 article, Taylor offers an extensive list of his source material, including ship records, the *Millennial Star*, and the *Journal of Discourses*. Mentioned last are "a great number of diaries," though none are directly cited in his work.²³ In his 1965 book, Taylor writes that "few [migrants] recorded, honestly or dishonestly, why they joined the Church, why they emigrated, or what the experience meant to them."²⁴ We now know this is not the case. In the nearly six decades since Taylor's book was published, access to the writings of these emigrants—including in digitized form—has opened the door for further exploration.²⁵

Other scholars have since built upon Taylor's work, using emigrant writings as a chief source. Professor Fred Woods at Brigham Young University, the curator of the vast Saints by Sea collection, has written extensively about these early emigrants. Several of his works draw heavily on first-person accounts written by emigrants. Of particular interest to my study are his 2002 book *Gathering to Nauvoo*; his 2008 article, "The Tide of Mormon Migration Flowing through the Port of Liverpool, England";²⁶ and his 2022 essay, "The Latter-day Saint Gathering."²⁷ In *Gathering to Nauvoo*, Woods's third chapter, "Embarkation and Crossing the Atlantic," directly cites over a dozen emigrant accounts, several of them accompanied by photographs of the emigrants themselves. The following chapter, "Up the Mississippi," includes citations to a number of additional emigrant accounts. Woods's article "The Tide of Mormon Migration Flowing through the Port of Liverpool, England" uses dozens of emigrant autobiographies, diaries, and letters as source material to document the Latter-day Saints' movements through Liverpool between

23. Phillip A. M. Taylor, "Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 22, nos. 1–4 (1954).

24. Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 154.

25. One example of this is the Saints by Sea database, which contains over thirteen hundred first-person emigration accounts written by Latter-day Saints. But even in Taylor's day, access to many emigrant accounts was possible, as evidenced by the scholarly work in this literature review that dates to the mid-twentieth century. Taylor, who wrote his 1965 book as a faculty member in the Department of American Studies at the University of Hull in Hull, U.K., would have had considerably more difficulty in accessing many of these emigrant accounts, largely stored in archives in the western U.S., than his American counterparts would have had.

26. Woods, "Tide of Mormon Migration," 60–86.

27. Woods, "Introduction: The Latter-day Saint Gathering," in Watt and Carruth, *Liverpool to Great Salt Lake*, xv–xxiii.

1840 and 1890. Woods notes several potential reasons for the writers' decisions to emigrate, including a desire to "come to Zion" and to be "taught by the Prophet of God,"²⁸ though analyzing migratory motive is not the principal purpose of the article. Woods's essay "The Latter-day Saint Gathering" also cites several first-person accounts, but of particular interest is his section "Letters Encourage the Gathering of British Saints," which quotes emigrants who corresponded with the Latter-day Saints still in Great Britain, encouraging their emigration. Some of these cite the original letter; others were published later in the *Millennial Star*. Woods's contributions to the literature are immensely noteworthy because they synthesize the largest trove of first-person emigrant accounts, the Saints by Sea database.

In 1977, Malcolm R. Thorp's article "The Religious Backgrounds of Mormon Converts in Britain, 1837–52" entered the literature at precisely the point Taylor left a hole, utilizing diaries, reminiscences (autobiographies), or "insightful family histories" to assemble case studies of 298 British Latter-day Saint emigrants.²⁹ He modeled his work after that of British minister and historian Leslie F. Church, whose 1948 treatise, *The Early Methodist People*, attempted to "rediscover the first Methodist *people*, and to see them, not only in groups or as followers of John Wesley, but as individuals with definite personalities and lives of their own."³⁰ "Too often," Thorp lamented, "it is the institutions that really count" to the Latter-day Saint historians of his day, "and little attention is paid to the rank and file."³¹ But Thorp's analysis had the express goal of identifying the British writers' motive for *converting* to the Latter-day Saint faith, not the subsequent step of *emigrating*. This distinction is important. The concept of emigration indeed formed part of the missionaries' pitch—the doctrine of gathering "permeated the literature, discourses, and music of the church," wrote historian Conway Sonne³²—but emphasizing conversion

28. Woods, "Tide of Mormon Migration," 69.

29. Malcolm R. Thorp. "The Religious Backgrounds of Mormon Converts in Britain, 1837–52," *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977): 52.

30. Leslie F. Church, *The Early Methodist People* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), vii, emphasis in original.

31. Thorp, "Religious Backgrounds," 51.

32. Conway B. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration, 1830–1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), xv. Taylor makes this case, as well: "It is, indeed, possible that, within the broader teaching about the Kingdom, the theme of emigration may have seemed especially attractive [to the British convert]. But it would be unwise to isolate this from the appeal of the Mormon faith as a whole." See Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 38.

motive over emigration motive changes Thorp's lens of focus and thus his results. Conversion is a spiritual act, costing nothing; emigration, as I show later in my study, is both temporal and spiritual but certainly has a significant economic cost. The culminating act of the decision to convert is baptism, a single, one-time act. The result of the decision to emigrate involves the sale or abandonment of nearly all of one's possessions and relationships; a monthslong voyage; a permanent change of residence, nationality, and social community; and a host of other factors. I do not dispute that the two are connected—"In the early days of the Church," taught President Russell M. Nelson, "conversion often meant emigration as well"³³—but in the work of the historian or social scientist, studying the two as separate (yet related) factors is essential to adequately understand migratory motives (or, in the inverse, to understand motives for joining the Church).³⁴ The dramatic difference between Thorp's findings and my own are evidence of this.³⁵ It is worth noting, too, that Thorp found that "emigration to America" did not "have any apparent influence on conversion,"³⁶ further solidifying the possibility that the two are separate enterprises and should be studied as such.

Other historical work has also attempted to use emigrants' writings as its primary source material. Rebecca Bartholomew's *Audacious Women: Early British Mormon Immigrants* is a hallmark account of one hundred female emigrants between 1838 and 1888, following them (wherever possible) from their conversions to the Church in Great Britain to their emigration to North America and, for many, to their subsequent migration to Utah. Bartholomew attempted to rely on "quality" documents³⁷ for each

33. Russell M. Nelson, "The Gathering of Scattered Israel," *Ensign* 36, no. 11 (November 2006): 79–81.

34. For this reason, I do not directly cite Polly Aird, "Why Did the Scots Convert?," *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 1 (2000): 91–122, in this work, although its subject matter is similar to my own, because Aird does not adequately distinguish between the acts of conversion and emigration. Her title suggests an emphasis on conversion, yet the paper is an analysis of the push and pull factors driving emigration. She frequently uses the terms "convert" and "emigrate" interchangeably, with no apparent distinction.

35. For example, Thorp did not discover any evidence of economic factors or "the building of Zion" having a role in converts' decision to join the Church. Both of these themes recur in my study, which will be detailed further. For Thorp's analysis, see Thorp, "Religious Backgrounds," 63.

36. Thorp, "Religious Backgrounds," 63.

37. Bartholomew defines this as "contemporary documents created by a directly-involved party," such as diaries. She called these "Type A" records. "Type B" records are "further removed from the actual events but still close to the women's lives," such as autobiographies or biographies written by a close family member. "Type C" records,

woman, but this was possible for only thirty-four of them; the remaining sixty-six are documented through autobiographies written later in life or biographies written by others.³⁸ In her seventh chapter, “Emigration,” Bartholomew undergoes a robust analysis of the emigrants’ writings. “Instead of considering theories of why they emigrated,” Bartholomew writes, “we will examine the phrases with which emigrants themselves described the adventure of migrating.” Many of the phrases she encountered overlap with my own discoveries, such as a desire to “go home,” obey “the gospel,” or act in accordance with “the spirit of gathering.”³⁹ Bartholomew’s work is valuable in charting potential motives for emigrants, though her sample is broader than my own in its scope (1838–88) and narrower in its demographics (a study of only females).

An essential—and unexpected—contribution to the literature is by John F. C. Harrison,⁴⁰ a renowned professor of history at the University of Leeds, Sussex University, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

the most numerous of all, include biographies written by descendants. The total tally for Bartholomew’s study: Type A, 34; Type B, 16; Type C, 50. See Rebecca Bartholomew, *Audacious Women: Early British Mormon Immigrants* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1995), xii–xiii.

38. Bartholomew, *Audacious Women*, xii–xiii.

39. Bartholomew, *Audacious Women*, 134–42.

40. When Harrison—a renowned professor of history at the University of Leeds, Sussex University, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison—passed away in 2018, the *Guardian* praised him as a “pioneer of ‘history from below,’” noting his extensive work on working-class movements and “popular” life in Victorian England. In his early work on this topic, he was not sympathetic to Mormonism, however. In 1971, Harrison clumped Mormonism under the umbrella of “popular religion,” alongside the “adventist and millenarian sects” that flourished in Victorian England—none of which qualified to be called, by his term, “respectable religion.” But by 1987, Harrison was intimately interested in Latter-day Saint history, as evidenced by his being invited to offer the Tanner Lecture at the Mormon History Association’s annual conference, in which he presented his research on Latter-day Saints in early Victorian Britain. Perhaps Harrison’s discovery, in his words, of the “rich collection of Mormon journals and autobiographies” from his period of study played a role in his paradigm shift on Mormonism. In his 1971 work, Harrison noted “popular religion[s]” were those “about which historians at present know very little”; by his keynote address in 1987, he’d discovered a trove of journals and autobiographies, “scarcely known outside Mormon circles, just waiting to be exploited by historians of nineteenth-century Britain.” His warmth toward Latter-day Saints (and, particularly, to BYU professor Malcolm Thorp) eventually led to an additional contribution to Mormon history: he sold some 5,400 items to Brigham Young University from his personal collection, dealing largely with Victorian British history. These books, pamphlets, and serials are now housed in the J. F. C. Harrison Collection in the Harold B. Lee Library. See J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain, 1832–51* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1971): 159; John F. C. Harrison, “The Popular History of Early Victorian Britain: A Mormon Contribution,” in Jensen and Thorp, *Mormons in Early*

His article, “The Popular History of Early Victorian Britain: A Mormon Contribution,” was presented as the Tanner Lecture⁴¹ at the Mormon History Association’s 1987 conference in Oxford, U.K. In it, Harrison studies thirty-five autobiographies written by Latter-day Saint converts who resided in Great Britain at some point in the 1830s or 1840s. He notes that despite living in “one of the periods of greatest political, economic, and social change in English history,” the writers center their accounts on two key events—baptism and emigration. “Time was to be measured as before or after the great event,” Harrison writes, initiated by baptism and “further emphasized by emigration.”⁴² However, Harrison comes to a surprising, Durkheimian conclusion, claiming that the writers’ impoverished temporal conditions quite literally *forced* them to emigrate—not of their own free will, but as compelled by their status:

The pursuit of material well-being and escape from the anxieties and stresses that poverty entails preoccupied most of them for much of their time. . . . They did not, for the most part, make the decisions that affected their lives, but were, in effect, controlled by others. A working man, even a skilled artisan with traditional notions of independence, could do little about external conditions that affected his work. Perhaps the biggest step toward emancipation that he could take was emigration, which seemed to offer a new dimension of freedom.⁴³

A significant amount of scholarly work shares commonalities with my own research, be it overlapping periods of focus or similar examinations of potential migratory motives. One 1989 undergraduate thesis from a British university, “Across the Waves: Mormon Emigration of British Saints, 1840–1870,” analyzes a similar time span as my own, and though the author discusses potential impetuses for emigration, she cites only three first-person accounts.⁴⁴ Conway B. Sonne’s landmark work, “Saints on the Seas,” masterfully describes potential reasons for

Victorian Britain, 1–15; and Malcolm Chase, “JFC Harrison Obituary,” *Guardian*, February 5, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/feb/05/jfc-harrison-obituary>.

41. The Tanner Lecture, now a mainstay of the Mormon History Association’s annual conference, was founded in 1980 and provides a platform for prominent, non-Latter-day Saint historians to share their research on themes relating to Latter-day Saint history or practice. See Dean L. May and Reid L. Neilson, eds., *The Mormon History Association’s Tanner Lectures: The First Twenty Years* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

42. Harrison, “Popular History,” 13.

43. Harrison, “Popular History,” 15.

44. Lily Pritchard, “Across the Waves: Mormon Emigration of British Saints 1840–1870” (undergraduate thesis, University of Bradford, 1989).

British migration—“to the Mormons the gathering was both spiritual and temporal,” he wrote—but his use of emigrant journals as a source is far outweighed by other data, such as missionary tracts, ship records, and Church publications.⁴⁵ Even so, Sonne operated with access to fewer records than the modern historian does, as evidenced by some of his assertions. For example, he claimed only 333 Latter-day Saint companies crossed the Atlantic between 1840 and 1890, although records now exist of hundreds more.⁴⁶ Historian W. S. Shepperson, in *British Emigration to North America*, asserts that “Mormons emigrated to improve their economic and social position, and because they believed it to be the will of God.”⁴⁷ Remarkably, this conclusion is declared without citing a single first-person account of an emigrant (missionaries excluded).

Methodology

This article consults a sample of diaries, autobiographies, and letters written by United Kingdom-born Latter-day Saint emigrants who traveled to North America between 1840 and 1860. (For simplicity, these writings are henceforth referred to by the blanket term “accounts.”) In this time period, some twenty-three thousand Latter-day Saints emigrated from England to North America, peaking with thirty-five hundred in 1856 alone.⁴⁸ Emigration paused in 1846, after the death of Joseph Smith and while Church leaders, then headquartered in Nauvoo, Illinois, searched for a new place to settle.⁴⁹ As such, my sample is divided into two sub-groups: the “Nauvoo period,” spanning from 1840 to 1846, and the “Utah period,” from 1847 to 1860. I choose 1860 as the ending point because the advent of the American Civil War in 1861 caused significant changes to the flow of Latter-day Saint emigration from England.⁵⁰

45. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas*, xv.

46. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas*, 148–59; for a more complete list of companies, see the *Deseret News 1997–98 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1996): 159–67.

47. Shepperson, *British Emigration to North America*, 143.

48. Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 145.

49. See Richard E. Bennett, *We'll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus 1846–1848* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997).

50. Many early Latter-day Saints saw the Civil War as a fulfillment of Joseph Smith's 1832 prophecy, in which he predicted the “rebellion of South Carolina,” so that the “Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States.” This revelation is now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 87. The revelation was likely used by early missionaries, and its contextualization of the war as a part of the chaos to precede Christ's Second Coming only hastened the need to gather. See Scott C. Esplin, “‘Have We Not Had a Prophet among Us?': Joseph Smith's Civil War Prophecy,” in *Civil War Saints* (Provo,

Journaling has long been a practice of Latter-day Saints. From the very first emigrant voyage in 1840, Church leaders encouraged emigrants to record their travels with acute detail.⁵¹ The majority of the existing accounts were written by men,⁵² though I made an effort to include women in my study wherever possible.⁵³ The accounts themselves are remarkable troves of information about the early Church in England, the emigrant experience, and life in the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ Many of

Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2012), 41–59. See also Richard E. Bennett, “‘We Know No North, No South, No East, No West’: Mormon Interpretations of the Civil War, 1861–1865,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 51–63. For a more complete examination of British emigration to Utah during the Civil War years, see Fred E. Woods, “East to West through North and South: Mormon Immigration during the Civil War,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 6–29.

51. Hugh Moon, a passenger on the 1840 ship *Britannia* (the first Latter-day Saint emigrant ship to leave England), recorded in his diary: “Brother Heber C. Kimball told me to write everything that transpired down in my journal from the time we left our homes.” See “The First Ships—1840–1849,” in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 12:426.

52. Wrote historian Rebecca Bartholomew: “Nineteenth-century Mormon church records in Britain were kept by men, which may explain why they dealt 96 percent with men. . . . Whether it is strictly true that [Victorian British women] *could* not write, most *did* not.” Historians have made strides in writing the oft-unwritten history of women, including Bartholomew—who, as the descendant of Welsh and English emigrants, sees her work as “a search for my mothers.” See Bartholomew, *Audacious Women*, viii–ix.

53. Nine of the fifty accounts I studied were written by women.

54. The accounts I studied are housed in several places. The resource that proved most useful was Brigham Young University’s Saints by Sea database, formerly called “Mormon Migration.” This online database includes ship records for every known vessel that carried Latter-day Saints across the Atlantic from 1840 to 1890. Biographical information—such as emigrants’ age, ship name, and travel dates—are readily accessible. Some writings of the emigrants themselves are available in this database, but only in snippets (and usually only when emigrants describe the journey itself, not the buildup to emigration, where hints as to motive are more likely found). As such, although I reference accounts published in *Saints by Sea* frequently, I located the original documents wherever possible. I also consulted FamilySearch’s digital records, an online genealogical service provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I found several accounts in physical archives, namely the Church History Library in Salt Lake City; Brigham Young University’s Harold B. Lee Library in Provo, Utah; the British Library in London; and the Cambridge University Library in Cambridge, U.K. The Church History Library holds troves of accounts, many of which I located using references in the *Saints by Sea* database, and a number are accessible in the library’s reading room on microfiche or in physical form. The Harold B. Lee Library includes every edition of *Our Pioneer Heritage*, a twenty-volume series published by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers between 1957 and 1977, which often includes full autobiographies of early British converts. The British Library and Cambridge University Library both contain published diaries of more well-known emigrants. The family history library at the local chapel of The Church

the accounts I consulted, however, had little information about clear motives for emigration. As such, I studied many more documents than those cited in this study; the fifty emigrants cited here were selected precisely because they referenced, either explicitly or implicitly, potential motives for their emigration. Where I had access to day-to-day diaries written by the emigrants, I focused my study on the period between that individual's baptism into the Church and the time of their emigration, because any discussion of motive typically fell in this period. These writings were rich and complex, chronicling many aspects of the daily life of nineteenth-century British people—work, family strife, holiday celebrations, religious meetings, social gatherings, and the sort. Rare were the instances in which individuals explicitly stated, “This is why I wish to emigrate.” Instead, I pieced together potential motives by coding writings based on recurrent themes, both temporal and spiritual—whether economic struggle, family in North America, or spiritual promptings—or other clues.

The diaries studied were written by a diverse group of authors—men and women, adults and children, single people and married people. Common characteristics include their birth in the United Kingdom (where birth records are available), departure from a British port (usually Liverpool),⁵⁵ and membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The average age upon departure of emigrants studied was twenty-six years old. A table of demographic information is included in the appendix.⁵⁶ I recognize the limits of my research. How emigrants describe their motivations may differ based on the time of writing or their intended audience, and because few explicitly state their motive, much of my analysis is reliant on logical conclusions

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Cambridge was an unexpectedly helpful resource as well, thanks to the superb work of former ward historian Leonard Reed in documenting the early converts in Cambridgeshire. I cite his work repeatedly.

55. All North America-bound ships carrying British Latter-day Saints between 1840 and 60 departed from Liverpool except three, which departed from Bristol: the *Caroline*, the *Harmony*, and the *Caroline* (each 1841 departures). See the *Deseret News 1997–98 Church Almanac*, 159–62.

56. In this table, each emigrant is numbered 1 through 50. Throughout the text, whenever I reference this dataset, I indicate it by including the number after the emigrant's name in parentheses, such as William Clayton (1). I do this for two reasons: First, I reference a number of secondary sources throughout my analysis, and I do not wish the reader to be confused when distinguishing between the two. Second, if the reader desires to see more demographic information on the emigrant quoted, the reader need only find the emigrant's number in the appendix.

based on their writings and their actions. I hope to have eliminated a degree of bias by counterbalancing emigrants' writings against those of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint missionaries and Church publications, but I recognize I still write through the lens of a twenty-first-century researcher.

Analysis

Economic Motives

The existing literature on British Latter-day Saints' emigratory motives, including P. A. M. Taylor's seminal works, focuses nearly exclusively on economic factors. It is a matter of fact that many of these emigrants were leaving a region besieged by economic deprivation: England faced severe economic recessions throughout the late 1830s and early 1840s, Ireland faced its Great Famine, and Scotland was whipped about by the early turbulence of the Industrial Revolution.⁵⁷ Taylor's work makes repeated reference to the British economy of the age, and with reason: "It may fairly be asserted that the Mormons began their work in Britain at a time of acute economic difficulties for the working classes, and of grave social discontent," wrote Taylor.⁵⁸ The People's Charter of 1838—a document signed by thousands of working-class British people and presented to Parliament—accurately expresses the general deprivation of the country's laborers during this time: "We find ourselves overwhelmed with public and private suffering. . . . Our traders are trembling on the verge of bankruptcy; our workmen are starving. Capital brings no profit, and labour no remuneration. The home of the artificer is desolate, and the warehouse of the pawnbroker is full."⁵⁹

An article in the *Times of London* on June 3, 1857, cited in Taylor's work, further describes the economic state of some Latter-day Saint converts: "The time of distress which just preceded the great emigration movement was exactly the time at which the highly coloured picture of peace, comfort and prosperity in a new land, drawn by the Mormonite missionary, would tell most powerfully upon our own people, crushed by low wages and tempted to look upon their own country as a scene of

57. Charles Read, "Laissez-Faire, the Irish Famine, and British Financial Crisis," *Economic History Review* 69, no. 2 (December 3, 2015): 411–34, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ehr.12274>.

58. Taylor, "Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?," 250.

59. Robert G. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement* (London: Truslove and Hanson, 1894), 87.

immovable hardship, inequality and oppression. . . . Their arguments were addressed to a mass that was already on the move.”⁶⁰

To contemporary observers, the British Latter-day Saints certainly appeared to form part of a “mass . . . already on the move.” During the hundred years between 1815 and 1914, around ten million people emigrated from Britain (the country’s 1914 population was only forty-three million).⁶¹ But a closer analysis shows distinctions between the Latter-day Saints and the British populace writ large. As Taylor explains, most British emigration to the U.S. during this period was that of able-bodied males, presumably seeking work in the New World and, in many cases, saving funds to bring family later. Among Latter-day Saints, however, the number of males and females was almost equal and included a notable number of children, suggesting a much higher rate of familial migration than other emigrant groups. Although Latter-day Saint emigrants are believed to be predominantly urban and of lower classes (factory workers, miners, and so forth), when Taylor divided Britain into regions of affluence and poverty, he found no distinction in Latter-day Saint emigration rates from the various regions (though Taylor’s analysis of emigrants as mostly urban has been called into question).⁶² Perhaps most damning of all to the economic-motive theory is Taylor’s analysis of Latter-day Saint emigration versus general emigration, wherein he finds sharp distinctions in year-over-year rates. Latter-day Saint emigration, he discovered, was much more responsive to trends within the Church than to the economic trends that pushed the emigration of their British compatriots to the United States.

60. Taylor, “Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?,” 252.

61. Amy J. Lloyd, “Emigration, Immigration and Migration in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *British Library Newspapers* (Detroit: Gale, 2007); “UK Population Estimates 1851 to 2014,” Office for National Statistics, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/adhoc/004356ukpopulationestimates1851to2014>.

62. The late Leonard Reed, former ward historian in the Cambridge Ward, disputes Taylor’s assertion that these British emigrants were predominantly urban. Of the 163 documented emigrants from Cambridgeshire from 1850 to 1862, only 33 came from urban areas, Reed argues. Writes Reed, “My study, which also looked at the same period (1850–62), showed that a majority of the Cambridgeshire emigrants came from rural areas—approximately 54–68% from rural locations compared to around 27–41% from urban areas. . . . Both Taylor’s figures and my own suffer from the limitations of available data, so are not entirely accurate. However, with 55 known emigrants in this period coming from *one Cambridgeshire rural parish alone* (Gravelly), Taylor’s figures cannot possibly represent the true picture.” For further analysis, see Reed, *Living Latter-day Saint History in Cambridgeshire*, 25, emphasis in original.

While Taylor's work helps contextualize Latter-day Saint emigration within its broader economic setting, we cannot generalize one motive for all, nor can we fairly distinguish economic motives from other factors. Taylor, admittedly, recognizes this: "There must be a certain element of ambiguity in any investigation into the secular or spiritual motives of Mormon emigration. . . . With a doctrine and propaganda of such a type, it is perfectly possible that the effect upon the minds of converts would not admit of any rigorous distinction between secular and spiritual."⁶³ My research confirms this: when emigrants refer to the paltry economic state of Britain, their language rarely fails to contain equal religious meaning, often connected to a millenarian belief in the coming end-times. Taylor's work does not use emigrant accounts as source material; in my study of these accounts, it is often impossible to divorce the temporal (often economic) motives for emigration with the spiritual, religious ones.

My analysis of economic motive centers on three themes: economics as a push or pull factor, economics as a nonfactor, and the prevailing idea of "Babylon" as the spiritual lens through which emigrants describe their temporal state.

Economics as Push or Pull Factor

The Church as an institution—whether through its leaders in Nauvoo and in Utah, its missionaries, its U.K.-based newspaper (the *Millennial Star*), or its printed missionary tracts—sometimes wielded economic motives as a tool to encourage emigration. The *Star* often referenced the temporal prosperity emigrants could enjoy in the New World. An article about one of the first companies in 1840 to leave Britain described the emigrants as "the industrious poor, who were upon the point of starvation in this land, or who were working like slaves to procure a very scanty substance," who "escape[d] from worse than Egyptian bondage, and [went] to a country where they [could] by their industry obtain an inheritance, and enjoy plenty for themselves and their children."⁶⁴ Another 1842 article noted the "oppression, priestcraft and iniquity" that abounded in Britain and called America "a country every way adapted to [the emigrants'] wants and conditions."⁶⁵ In 1850, yet another article pleaded for more emigrant workers: "We feel the need of more laborers,

63. Taylor, "Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?" 267.

64. "Emigration," *Millennial Star* 1, no. 10 (February 1841): 263.

65. "Emigration," *Millennial Star* 2, no. 10 (February 1842): 153.

for more efficient help, and multiplied means of farming and building at this place. We want men. Brethren, come from the States, from the nations, come! and help us to build and grow, until we can say, enough—the valleys of Ephraim are full.”⁶⁶

Emigration was temporarily put on hold after the martyrdom of Church President Joseph Smith in 1844 and Latter-day Saints were forced to evacuate Nauvoo in 1846. During the interregnum, British Latter-day Saints took it upon themselves to approach the queen and petition for land on British-controlled Vancouver Island. Their letter, titled “Memorial to the Queen for the Relief, by Emigration of a Portion of Her Poor Subjects,” makes frequent and forceful reference to emigration as an economic decision. Instead of making a religious argument for emigration, its authors focus entirely on the temporal destitution of the British working class:

Your memorialists are moved to address your Majesty by the unexampled amount of abject, helpless, and unmerited misery which at present prevails among the labouring classes of this country. . . . The sufferings and destitution of these portions of your Majesty’s subjects have, in the judgment of your memorialists, reached a point at which it has become the duty of both sexes, and of all ranks, to use every constitutional means for their relief and remedy. . . . Your memorialists, without attempting to enumerate the many alleged causes of the present national distress and suffering, feel convinced that Emigration to some portion of your Majesty’s vacant territories is the only permanent means of relief left to a rapidly increasing population, which, if retained here, must swell the aggregate amount of misery, wretchedness, and want.⁶⁷

By 1849, the request for land in Canada was denied, and British emigration to the U.S. was resumed. The Church, now headquartered in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, established its Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company, a welfare system that functioned off the volunteer donations of well-settled members in Salt Lake City.⁶⁸ Through the fund, emigrants

66. “Important from Salt Lake City,” *Millennial Star* 12, no. 8 (April 1850): 120.

67. Quoted in J. B. Munro, “Mormon Colonization Scheme for Vancouver Island,” *Washington Historical Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (October 1934): 279–80.

68. According to its articles of incorporation, the PEF’s purpose was twofold: to assist the migration of both the poor and of skilled laborers. In 1856, the criteria for receiving PEF loans was changed to prioritize those who had been waiting the longest to emigrate. See Scott Alan Carson, “Indentured Migration in America’s Great Basin: Occupational Targeting and Adverse Selection,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32, no. 3 (Winter 2002): 389–90. For further reading, see Gustive O. Larson, “The Story of

could receive a loan to aid the costs of travel and repay it on some future day. Though it wasn't available to British converts until later, by 1853 the PEF was being touted in the *Millennial Star* as an effective path out of poverty: "Many a Saint, poor, afflicted, and distressed, will yet turn to the Emigrating Fund as to the guiding star to a better land."⁶⁹ The effect this program had on emigration cannot be easily quantified, though it is worth noting a concern from Church leaders around this time was one of emigrants making the trek solely for financial purposes. In 1855, Church President Brigham Young wrote to Elder Franklin D. Richards, then the British Mission president, "Be wary of assisting any of those who come into the Church now, during these troublesome times for Britain, whose chief aim and intention may be to get to America."⁷⁰

Several emigrants made note of some passengers who seemed interested in economic gain and nothing else. In a letter, one individual, Joseph Fielding (11), wrote of several of his fellow emigrants who left the group upon reaching the United States: "They seem afraid to suffer affliction with the people of God, and so go to Missouri, where there are none, thinking also to get a little more money."⁷¹ Another emigrant, George Whitaker (32), wrote of meeting some friends in St. Louis, who told him he "could make a better living there than at Nauvoo, as it was a very poor place to make money." He declined their offer, but not before noting that "quite a number of the weak-minded Saints remained there" in St. Louis, presumably for economic reasons.⁷²

Nonetheless, incidents of emigrants writing specifically of economic allure in their decision to emigrate—and not citing parallel religious motives—are rare. Of my sample, 1841 emigrant Richard Bentley (9) is the lone example. He wrote of a family friend who encouraged his emigration to America as "the best thing I could do as there was a much better chance for an opening for a young man in that country than in England."⁷³

the Perpetual Emigration Fund," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 18, no. 2 (September 1931): 184–94; and Heather Fay Howard, "An Economic Analysis of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2008).

69. "The Perpetual Emigrating Fund," *Millennial Star* 15, no. 47 (November 19, 1853): 753.

70. *Millennial Star* 17, no. 52 (December 1855): 814–15. Interestingly, Young signs this letter as "President, P.E.F. Co." instead of as "Church President."

71. "Letter from Joseph Fielding," Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1207>.

72. "Autobiography of George Whitaker," Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1101>.

73. "Autobiography of Richard Bentley," Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1204>.

Thus, although it is clear that economic factors were frequently mentioned to encourage migration, there is a significant dearth of references to economic benefit alone in this dataset. Instead, when writing about the financial distress of the U.K. or the opportunities of North America, emigrants usually paired those themes with religious ideas and language.

Economics as a Nonfactor

In January 1841, only months after the first wave of British emigrants set sail, the Church's First Presidency wrote a letter to the British Saints encouraging emigration. The letter pushes back on any assumption of temporal benefit from emigration; instead, British Saints are told to "freely make a sacrifice of their time, their talents, and their property, for the prosperity of the kingdom."⁷⁴ On top of the "tribulation" Saints would face upon arriving in America, the trip was expensive (costing between £9 and £15 per passenger), and for the first decade of emigration, loans from the Perpetual Emigrating Fund were not available, so converts were responsible for paying their own way (or receiving modest help from the local branches).⁷⁵

In the accounts studied, there are many more references to emigrants spurning financial opportunity or economic gain in order to emigrate than there are in favor of it. Several people described receiving financial offers to stay and choosing to emigrate nonetheless. Upon deciding to emigrate in 1841, Mary Ann Weston Maughan's (7) father hired a series of lawyers to convince her to stay in England. She writes in her diary their offer to "give me money to stay at home but none to go away with." Mary was undeterred: "But trusting in the work of God I bade them all adieu."⁷⁶ Thomas Steed (29), a teenager when he emigrated, was

74. "Joseph Smith Papers: History, 1838–1856, Volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842]," 1148, Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/320>.

75. Taylor claims migration was "as likely to be as high as £15" per person; an 1856 *Millennial Star* article claims it was £9 for those over one year old and £4.10 for infants. In early Victorian Britain, a common laborer in London received between twenty and thirty shillings per week; thus, the cost to cross the Atlantic was the equivalent of about three months' wages. See Taylor, "Why Did British Mormons Emigrate?," 267; "Emigration to Utah for 1856," *Millennial Star* 18, no. 8 (February 1856): 122; Liza Picard, "The Working Classes and the Poor," British Library, October 14, 2009, <https://www.bl.uk/victorian-britain/articles/the-working-classes-and-the-poor>.

76. "Journal and Autobiography of Mary Ann Weston Maughan," Saints by Sea, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/509>.

first approached by a man with a job in Scotland to work “under a first class gardener, ‘So you would,’ said he, ‘be fixed for life.’” Steed declined the offer and emigrated.⁷⁷ When 1842 emigrant George Cannon (14) resigned from his job to travel to America, his employer offered him “five shillings a week more wages,” saying it was “quite absurd to think of more distress coming on this country—that things were beginning to look brighter, and in a short time would be (as he termed it) alright.” In dramatic fashion, Cannon recalled his response to his employer, in which his boss relented: “Finding that I was determined by the help of God to go, he acknowledged that my testimony and his own observation had led him to conclusions which made him tremble, and he begged of me to write to him when I got to Nauvoo the truth, and he would place confidence in my account, and he thought he could induce about forty of his relatives to join him in emigrating to Nauvoo, and they are pretty rich in worldly substance (he has no prejudice against the doctrine.)”⁷⁸

Although the financial status of emigrants prior to their departure from Great Britain is not always clear, it can be assumed several emigrants were quite well-to-do based on their occupations or other clues in their writings. Edward Ockey (4) inherited his father’s farm and must have received significant wealth from it, because he wrote of paying the “passage to America” of six other Latter-day Saints—a significant sum. He later claimed he “had loaned out a great portion of [his] money to bring the poor saints to America which consisted of about \$2,000,”⁷⁹ a sum that likely would have covered the sailing cost of about two hundred emigrants.⁸⁰ William Rowley (28), an 1843 emigrant, wrote of “the loss of rich and influential friends and connections, with other claims

77. “The Life of Thomas Steed from His Own Diary, 1826–1910,” 7, FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/547052-redirect>.

78. “Journal of George Cannon,” Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1160>. It is unclear whether Cannon’s employer ever followed through on his promise.

79. “A Short Account of the Life of Edward Ockey,” 1–2, MSS SC 681, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

80. This is an estimate. An original copy of Ockey’s diary is not available. I compared several typescripts of it (at the Lee Library and on FamilySearch.org), each of which use the American (USD) dollar sign (\$). This is likely due to his autobiography being written decades after settling in Utah. However, it is unlikely he calculated the sum he spent in paying for others’ emigration in USD, since he made that payment in 1841 while still in England and before ever traveling to the U.S. As such, I assume that Ockey’s figure of 2,000 is in pounds (GBP, £), and either out of habit or the error of later transcribers, that sign was changed to USD. My calculation is simple: I divide his figure (£2000) by the reported cost of



FIGURE 2. Hannah Tapfield King, studio portrait copied from ambrotype, 1850. Image was taken in Cambridge, England, before King migrated to the United States. Public domain, courtesy Church History Library.

of a lucrative and secular nature,” which he suffered by emigrating to the U.S.: “Yet all these have been hushed and subdued in the contemplation of thus becoming a citizen in one of Zion’s stakes.”⁸¹ Hannah Tapfield King (40; fig. 2), who emigrated with her husband, came from some wealth. Days before sailing, the King estate was sold, and Hannah wrote in her diary, “It only fetched 615 £—I must say I feel disappointed but they think we must go now & we cannot help ourselves I had expected it to realize much more—it is a sweet pretty place—well the will of God be done.”⁸² Robert Crookston (13) wrote that his “neighbors thought we were crazy, and as they knew

that we could not take much of our possessions with us we had to sell everything at a great sacrifice.”⁸³ But he thought little of their opinions: “We wanted to come to Zion and be taught by the prophet of God. We had the spirit of gathering so strongly that Babylon had no claim on us.” An 1855 emigrant, Jane Charters Robinson Hindley (46), wrote that she “forsook my home but not to gather wealth or the perishable things of this world.”⁸⁴ In this dataset, the evidence of potential economic benefit fueling emigration is small in comparison to the evidence of individuals spurning economic benefit in order to emigrate.

emigration for Latter-day Saints (between £9 and £15), and the result is between 133 and 222. See footnote 75 for more discussion of emigration costs.

81. “Letter from W. Rowley—January 25, 1844,” *Saints by Sea*, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/867>.

82. Dorothy Brewerton, Carolyn Gorwill, and Leonard Reed, *The Songstress of Darnford Dale: The Life of Poetess, Diarist and Latter-day Saint Pioneer Hannah Tapfield King* (Cambridge: Cambridge Printers, 2011), 67.

83. “Autobiography of Robert Crookston,” *Saints by Sea*, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1161>.

84. “Journal of Jane Charters Robinson Hindley,” *Saints by Sea*, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1156>.

Babylon

In the accounts studied, references to economic deprivation are often paired with spiritual or biblical imagery, drawing attention to end-times prophecy. This Mormon millenarianism has a prominent place in the *Millennial Star*, which included a section called “Earthquakes, Floods, and Shipwrecks” and was later titled “Do We Not Live in the Last Days?”⁸⁵ In these passages, natural disasters and other disruptions around the world were publicized, suggesting that the apocalypse preceding Christ’s return was shortly at hand. One 1851 *Millennial Star* passage read, “We are rapidly merging into the last days, and we shall be compelled to witness the scenes thereof.”⁸⁶ Often, the term “Babylon”—the ancient cosmopolitan capital of the Babylonian empire—became synonymous with the sinful world emigrants attempted to escape.⁸⁷ One particularly somber edition on December 28, 1861, declared, “The year closes gloomily on the nations of Babylon.”⁸⁸ This suggests that Babylon had evolved to be a uniform term that encompassed *all* nations beyond the borders of Zion, not just England. The desire to escape Babylon was a key motive of the gathering, as stated in an 1830 revelation to Joseph Smith: “And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; . . . wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked” (D&C 29:7–8).

During early Latter-day Saint missionary work in Britain, “Babylon” was sometimes used as a moniker specifically for the United Kingdom, suggesting that the impoverished nation represented the filth and sin of the world. This is a somewhat puzzling description of Great Britain, as historian Matthew Rasmussen notes, since early Church leaders (like founder Joseph Smith) repeatedly called the United Kingdom a “blessed” region, justifying the decision to send missionaries to the area. Nonetheless, at some point shortly after missionaries arrived in the British Isles, the “Babylon” moniker took hold. “In spite of Joseph Smith’s

85. “Earthquakes, Floods, and Shipwrecks,” *Millennial Star* 1, no. 10 (February 1841): 260.

86. “Do We Not Live in the Last Days?,” *Millennial Star* 13, no. 13 (July 1851): 205.

87. As early as 1831, Joseph Smith’s revelations included language that referred to Babylon and expressly instructed the Latter-day Saints to escape Babylon. One early revelation condemned anyone who walks “after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall” (D&C 1:16).

88. “Retrospect of the Year,” *Millennial Star* 23, no. 52 (December 1861): 831.

proclamation regarding the region's blessedness, missionaries throughout the nineteenth century reviled the industrialized north" and often referred to it as Babylon.⁸⁹ The frequent references in emigrants' journals to their homeland as "Babylon" likely stems from the missionaries' prior usage of the term.

An 1845 emigrant, George Whitaker (32), when recording his doubts about leaving his homeland, reminded himself that his native country was "Babylon," and that he must leave so as to "not [be] partakers of her sins, and that we receive not of her plagues. Then I felt glad that I had left my native country, the place of my childhood, and all its surroundings."⁹⁰ This reference to "plagues" implies that Whitaker saw Babylon in a scriptural light, wherein plagues would be poured out on the nations of the world in the last days (Rev. 16:1–9). Peter McIntyre (39), when emigrating in 1853, also made frequent references to Babylon in his journal. Instead of referring to his homeland as England, he mentioned that he "leave(s) none of my family in Babylon," and referred to his emigration as "releas[ing] me and my children from Babylonish captivity."⁹¹ On a later occasion, he wrote of leaving Britain, then corrected himself with "Babylon": "We feel to rejoice as we are the 9th ship load that has left Britain or Babylon this season, and there is no more coming after us."⁹² On May 24, 1853, McIntyre—who was a veteran of the Napoleonic War—writes a particularly biting entry in his diary, weaving his economic poverty with spiritual dialogue:

This is Queen Victoria's birthday. My God will remove your diadem and take off your crown, your power will be as the potsherd and King Messiah will as with an iron rod pound all your scepters. All you kings and queens of Babylon. Come Lord, our King, come quickly is my prayer. Thou knowest what I suffered from oppression and hard labor for a morsel of bread after my sore travel, hunger and thirst in the Peninsular War. My cry to thee, Oh, Lord, is Remember the cry of the poor and fulfil thy promise, destroy them who have oppressed the hireling and kept back their wages by fraud.⁹³

89. Matthew L. Rasmussen, *Mormonism and the Making of a British Zion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016), 16.

90. "Autobiography of George Whitaker," *Saints by Sea*, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1101>.

91. "Peter McIntyre Autobiography," 29, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, accessed August 28, 2023, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/98d32533-5181-47b8-90d0-f5eaf0c6c08e/0/36>.

92. "Peter McIntyre Autobiography," 33.

93. "Peter McIntyre Autobiography," 36.



FIGURE 3. Thomas Callister, photograph by Charles Roscoe Savage, 1860. Public domain, courtesy Church History Library.

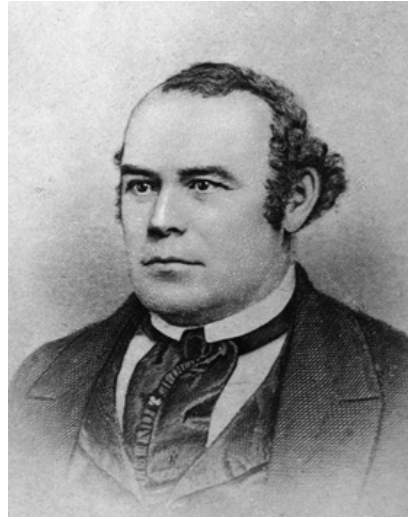


FIGURE 4. Parley P. Pratt (1807–1857), photograph by Charles Roscoe Savage of an engraving. public domain, courtesy Church History Library.

In this entry, McIntyre portrays the queen as an anti-Christ figure, praying that her power be squelched and her nation destroyed by the true King. Though he never explicitly states such, his references to wage fraud may suggest McIntyre viewed America as a land of economic opportunity, where his postwar poverty would no longer impair him. This is a sentiment echoed by Thomas Callister (12; fig. 3), who quotes in his journal Elder Parley P. Pratt (fig. 4), one of the early missionaries and a fellow passenger on his ship: “Elder Parley P. Pratt was on board & delivered an oration to the Saints. It was a New York ship & had an American flag. I recollect him tell that the stars & stripes had reference to a land of liberty & that they had now left the oppressive land of England & was now on their way to a land of liberty & a land of plenty & would no longer have to give six pence for a small loaf of bread &c, &c.”⁹⁴

Here, Callister characterizes Pratt as alluding to England as an “oppressive” land and America as a “land of liberty” and of economic opportunity. Just one year prior, an article in the *Millennial Star* used near-identical language in describing the United States: “They hoist the *Flag of Liberty*—the ensign of Zion—the stars and stripes of the American Union; and

94. Collection of Reminiscences of Thomas Callister,” Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1199>.

under its protection they completely and practically NULIFY THE BREAD TAX. They eat free bread, free tea, free sugar, free every thing.”⁹⁵

Matthew Rowan (45), an 1855 emigrant, weaves these themes together in his poetry. To Rowan, the concept of Babylon was inherently millenarian; as the chaos of the last days would come to a head in Babylon, the Saints would gather to Zion. He kept a journal full of original poetry, and he wrote this apocalyptic poem while aboard an emigrant ship:

Great plagues will storm the land, and tornadoes sweep the deep
Famine then will stalk abroad, they may sow but will not reap.
The convulsed earth will yawn! and its myriads will entomb.
Such will be the fate of bab'lon, when the Saints go home.
When the Saints go home, when the Saints go home
when the vials are pour'd out, and the Saints all home.⁹⁶

In this dataset, emigration is often described as an act of fleeing Babylon, feeding into prevalent millenarian ideas and end-times prophecy.

Prophetic Charisma and Obedience to God

“No single doctrine distinguishes Mormonism more sharply than the belief in direct revelation,” wrote historian Richard Bushman.⁹⁷ Early Latter-day Saints believed in two forms of communication with God: through an oracle, known as the “prophet,” or directly to the believer through the Holy Spirit. British converts were introduced to this idea in their investigations of the faith and likely recognized it as a unique aspect of the faith.⁹⁸ Emigrant journals reflect this, making frequent references to direction from God or other forms of heavenly guidance as motivation for the decision to emigrate. This guidance is often explained in one of two ways: as a desire to follow

95. “Emigration,” *Millennial Star* 2, no. 10 (March 1842): 154, emphasis in original.

96. Matthew Rowan, “Poetry Book, circa 1848–1858,” 6, MS 6084, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/512b8845-f6a2-4bd0-9ab9-4f0ca716deb5/0/7>.

97. Richard Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 27.

98. Pratt’s *A Voice of Warning* cites the word “revelation” 55 times and “prophet” 103 times. Writes Pratt, “But do you ask, why is the Lord to commission men by actual Revelation? I reply, because he has no other way of sending men in any age” (61). And later, when assuring latter-day, “face to face” communication between God and man: “Let me inquire how does God make a covenant with the people in any age? The answer must be by communicating his will to them by actual revelation; for without this, it would be impossible to make a covenant between two parties” (66).

the direction of charismatic authority, such as a prophet or a missionary, or a more ambiguous manner of following the voice of God (through personal revelation, scripture, or another medium).

Charismatic Authority

The idea that Latter-day Saints were led by a living prophet (fig. 5), in the same vein as Old Testament patriarchs, was a key factor for many emigrants. Thomas Steed (29), an 1843 emigrant, records a scene upon the ship's arrival to Nauvoo. George A. Smith, one of the Church's leaders, came on board to welcome the emigrants and asked, "What do you come here for?" Steed recorded the simple response of one of his fellow travelers: "To be instructed in the ways of the Lord."⁹⁹ Early Latter-day Saints expected that instruction to come by way of a living prophet, called in the same manner that Jehovah had spoken to the Old Testament prophets. Pratt's *A Voice of Warning* focused on this principle from the beginning and with emphasis. Toward the front of his book, Pratt noted the role of revelation in the primitive biblical church and connects that belief to the present day:

But, O, kind reader, whoever you are, if . . . you are bound by the creeds of men, to believe just so much and no more, you had better stop here; for if you were to believe the things written in the Bible, that are yet to come, you will be under the necessity of believing miracles, signs, and wonders, revelations, and manifestations of the power of God, even beyond any thing that any former generation has witnessed; . . . for no man ever yet believed the Bible, without believing and expecting such glorious events in the latter days.¹⁰⁰



FIGURE 5. Joseph Smith, photograph by W. B. Carson of portrait, 1879. Public domain, courtesy Library of Congress.

99. "Life of Thomas Steed," 8.

100. Pratt, *Voice of Warning*, 54–55.



FIGURE 6. William Clayton, photographer unknown. Public domain, courtesy Church History Library.

During Smith's tenure as head of the Church, many emigrants equated their goal with personal interaction with Smith. Several emigrants referred to Nauvoo simply as "the land of Joseph" in their writings.¹⁰¹ William Clayton (1; fig. 6), a prolific writer, penned a letter to the Saints in England encouraging them to join him in Nauvoo. The bulk of his letter dealt with squashing negative rumors about Smith and lauding his character. Clayton wrote that Smith is "innocent" and "not an idiot, but a man of sound judgment, and possessed of abundance of intelligence." Not lost on Clayton was

Smith's prophetic quality: "He seems exceeding well versed in the scriptures, and whilst conversing upon any subject such light and beauty is revealed I never saw before. If I had come from England purposely to converse with him a few days I should have considered myself well paid for my trouble."¹⁰² A sister and brother-in-law of 1842 emigrant Thomas Wrigley (20) had previously immigrated to the U.S., and he visited them en route to Nauvoo. When he visited them in St. Louis, they immediately attempted to persuade him to leave his newfound faith. "In turn," Wrigley wrote, "I preached the gospel to them and bore a faithful testimony to the truth of Joseph Smith being a Prophet of the Lord."¹⁰³ The most compelling of the new doctrines—and the most justifiable for his decision to immigrate to Nauvoo—was that of a living prophet. Some converts saw their emigration as a form of direct obedience to the prophet, like 1843 emigrant George Spilsbury (27): "We left our native land in obedience

101. "Journal of George Cannon," Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1160>; "Letter from Robert Reid—March 15, 1843," Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1175>.

102. "Letter from William Clayton—December 10, 1840," Saints by Sea, August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1080>.

103. "Autobiography of Thomas Wrigley," Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/361>.

to the command of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith to come to the gathering place of the saints, namely, Nauvoo.”¹⁰⁴

Missionaries, too, played the role of charismatic leaders and had sway in emigrants’ decisions. James Barnes (6) joined the Church shortly after the first missionaries’ arrival to Britain in 1837, and he later spent time as a traveling missionary himself. But after a period preaching the gospel and seeing “many of my Brethren . . . [go] to the Land of Zion,” he “began to want to follow after them.” Among his chief incentives was “to see the prophet of the Lord.” However, because he “did not like to do anything contrary to the



FIGURE 7. Brigham Young, photograph of a daguerreotype, circa 1858, photographer unknown. Public domain, courtesy Church History Library.

will of the Lord,” he first petitioned Apostle Wilford Woodruff—then stationed in Great Britain—for advice. Woodruff instructed Barnes “to go as soon as I could,” so Barnes immediately “began to make preparations to get home to Zion.”¹⁰⁵ Brigham Young (fig. 7), prior to his tenure as Church President, served as a missionary in Great Britain and was assigned to shepherd a group of emigrants to America in 1841. Thomas Quayle (5) wrote of the others on board, who “worshipped and obeyed” Young: “With a masterful air he stood among his followers. Most of the time during that journey he spent preaching to us. His was a firm belief in the direct revelation of this New World religion. So sincere and honest was he in his belief that he inspired the same sincerity and honesty in the belief of his followers.”¹⁰⁶ This idea of early Church leaders was common across the emigrant accounts in this dataset; the novelty of a living prophet who communed with Deity was discussed as a pull factor in emigration.

104. “Autobiography of George Spilsbury,” *Saints by Sea*, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1565>.

105. “Barnes diary.”

106. “God and Gold,” 491.

Obedience to Other Heavenly Guidance

Other emigrants wrote of obedience to God—by way of scripture, direct revelation, or something else—as a motive for emigration. In 1842, David Candland (16; fig. 8), who boarded a ship from Liverpool to New Orleans, wrote in his journal that he was “appointed to leave England the land of my birth” and gather “to the body of the church in Nauvoo.” But that appointment was not by a Church authority or any earthly entity; rather, he was to “obey the call of heaven” in emigrating.¹⁰⁷ James Burgess, another passenger aboard the same ship as Candland, writes of bidding “farewell to our native land, leaving all as it were for the truth’s sake.” His motive, too, was a call from Deity: “Because we believed that God had spoken from the heavens and began to call his children together

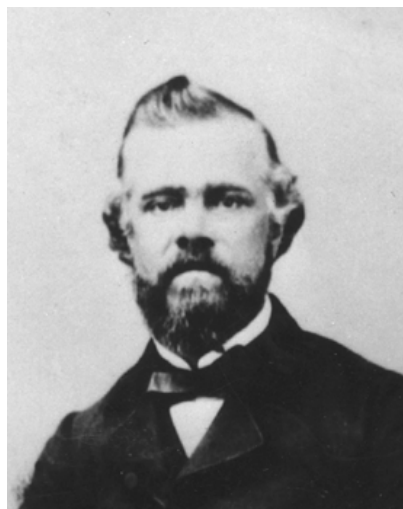


FIGURE 8. David Candland. Public domain, courtesy Church History Library.

from the ends of the earth to prepare for the coming of his son Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁸ This echoes Pratt’s *A Voice of Warning*, wherein Pratt writes, “But in these last days, God has again spoken from the heavens, and commissioned men to go, . . . commanding them everywhere to repent, and obey the gospel.”¹⁰⁹ Priscilla Staines (31), who emigrated in 1844, wrote of her emigration as a requisite for her salvation. The “doctrine of the gathering,” she wrote, “was preached at this time with great plainness by the elders as an imperative command of God. We looked upon the gathering as necessary to our salvation.”¹¹⁰ She further wrote extensively of a “promise” given her by God: “When I arrived at Liverpool and saw the

107. “Journal of David Candland,” *Saints by Sea*, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/862>.

108. “Journal of James Burgess,” *Saints by Sea*, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/520>.

109. Pratt, *Voice of Warning*, 198.

110. Priscilla Staines as quoted in Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), 286.

ocean that would soon roll between me and all I loved, my heart almost failed me. But I had laid my idols all upon the altar. There was no turning back. I remembered the words of the Savior: ‘He that leaveth not father and mother, brother and sister, for my sake, is not worthy of me,’ and I believed his promise to those who forsook all for his sake; so I thus alone set out for the reward of everlasting life, trusting in God.”¹¹¹

In this passage, Staines did not claim that God spoke to her and directly commanded her emigration. Instead, she took instruction from missionaries and from scripture as her command. A passage from the New Testament—in which Christ directs his followers to leave “houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake” (Matt. 19:29) as a prerequisite for his acceptance—became a subject of her literal interpretation. She applied Christ’s injunction, recorded some 1800 years previous, as a direct command to herself. This is a form of biblical literalism outlined repeatedly by Pratt in *A Voice of Warning*, wherein he quotes several prophecies of the Old and New Testaments and identifies their literal fulfillments. “Having summed up the description of these great events spoken of by these three Prophets, I would just remark, that there is no difficulty in understanding them all to be perfectly plain, and literal in their fulfilment,” he writes, and he derides religious leaders who view scripture to be symbolic or figurative.¹¹² It is no stretch to assume that Staines’s interpretation of Christ’s injunction to leave her family behind was a literal one, spurring her emigration from her homeland to the United States.

Some emigrants seemed to use their journals as spaces for open contemplation, expressing doubtfulness, or working through the uncertainties that lay ahead. Hannah Tapfield King (40) wrote extensively about her preparations for emigration, and she frequently lamented the opposition she faced from friends and family. Consistently, she relied on the “Will of God” as the motive for her decision: “Oh! Nothing but the Conviction that I am doing the Will of God could urge me forward to take the Stand I have done—and many trials are yet in store for me! I feel that if I am enabled to overcome them it may truly be said I shall be one of those ‘who have come up thro’ much tribulation’ but I trust in God!”¹¹³

111. Staines, quoted in Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 288.

112. Pratt, *Voice of Warning*, 80–81.

113. Brewerton, Gorwill, and Reed, *Songstress of Dernford Dale*, 66.

On other occasions, she wrote in her journal as if it was a space for open prayer to God. In the following passage, she supplicated Deity for guidance in her travels, while acknowledging all she is about to sacrifice is “for the Gospel’s sake”:

I seem to realize something tonight of the Sacrifice we are about to make for the Gospel’s sake Oh! my Father in Heaven! thou that Knowest the hearts of all living, Thou Knowest that we are leaving our dearly beloved Home for Thee and Thy Gospel’s sake—and that we may dwell with thy people—Oh! my Father—strengthen us, and preserve us from every evil—and from the pestilence that walketh in darkness and grant Oh! my Father that we may reach the Land of Zion in Safety with all our dear ones in health & strength and safety.¹¹⁴

Jane C. Robinson Hindley (46; fig. 9), an 1855 emigrant, used similar language to describe her decision: “I believed in the principle of the gathering and felt it my duty to go although it was a severe trial to me . . . to leave my native land and the pleasing associations that I had formed there. But my heart was fixed, I knew in whom I had trusted and with the fire of Israel’s God burning in my bosom I forsook my home.”¹¹⁵

Both of these emigrants, who departed from England only two years apart from each other, described their decision to migrate in similar terms. King wrote of a “Conviction that I am doing the Will of God”; Hindley wrote of her “duty to go” and felt “the fire of Israel’s God burning in my bosom.” These two emigrants, like many others, described some sort of divine guidance pushing them to go, independent of charismatic leaders.



FIGURE 9. Jane C. Robinson Hindley, ambrotype portrait with unidentified child, circa 1860, photographer unknown. Public domain, courtesy Church History Library.

114. Brewerton, Gorwill, and Reed, *Songstress of Dernford Dale*, 67.

115. “Journal of Jane Charters Robinson Hindley,” *Saints by Sea*, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1156>.

The Doctrine of the Gathering

The most prevalent theme relating to emigrant motives in the journals analyzed is the doctrine of the gathering. This gathering was twofold; the emigrants wrote of gathering *to* a specific place (Zion) as well as gathering *with* a specific people (fellow Latter-day Saints or family). Early Latter-day Saints believed that in preparation for Christ's return, Christians must gather to a place of refuge and build a literal city called "Zion." This idea is reinforced in Latter-day Saint scripture¹¹⁶ and was consistently preached by early missionaries.¹¹⁷ Pratt's *A Voice of Warning* references "Zion" fifteen times and often links it to Old Testament prophecies about the last days: "From [the scriptures] we learn, First, that there is a set time to build up Zion, or the city of which Isaiah speaks; namely just before the second coming of Christ."¹¹⁸ This city would be occupied by "the pure in heart," as Joseph Smith recorded in a revelation in 1833 (D&C 97:21).

As Latter-day Saint emigration from Europe to the U.S. matured, patterns in emigrants' writings relating to gathering become apparent. I examine here the two overarching categories of gathering, as described by emigrants: gathering to a physical location, such as Zion, the "promised land," or America; and gathering with a people, such as the Saints, or with family. I also note a shift away from an emphasis on America after Latter-day Saints relocate outside of U.S. territory in 1847.

Gathering to a Place

In the early Latter-day Saint mind, Zion was more than just a community; it was a physical location. In 1831, Smith declared the Lord had commanded him to organize in Jackson County, Missouri, a "land of promise" that had been "appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints"

116. In an 1830 revelation, the Saints are commanded to "be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land," which will serve as a refuge: to "be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked" (D&C 29:8). An 1831 revelation links gathering with protection from the "enemy," association with a "righteous people," and endowment with "power from on high" (D&C 38:31–32; see also D&C 45:68). In the summer of 1831, the term "Zion" became synonymous with Missouri in the revelations; in the three revelations delivered in July and August of that year, "Zion" was used seven times to describe Jackson County, Missouri (see D&C 57 through 59).

117. For a more thorough investigation of the idea of gathering as taught by early Church leaders, see David Morris, "The Rhetoric of the Gathering and Zion: Consistency through Change 1831–1920," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 154–71.

118. Pratt, *Voice of Warning*, 177.

and for “the city of Zion” (D&C 57: 1–2).¹¹⁹ Persecution from Missourians forced the Latter-day Saints to flee Missouri and find refuge on the other side of the Mississippi River, where they settled at Commerce, later Nauvoo, in western Illinois. When the first British converts arrived in the U.S. in 1840, Zion was being built in Nauvoo; in the mid-1840s, when Latter-day Saints were driven from Nauvoo and later settled in what is now Utah, the latter became the new gathering place and subsequently was given the title “Zion.” Wherever Zion was being built, emigrants frequently equated that place to the “land of promise.” But to many early Saints, America and the concept of Zion were one and the same.

In many diaries written during the Nauvoo period (1840–46), “Zion,” “America,” and the “land of promise” were used interchangeably, with no noticeable distinction. Rarely is this as apparent as the case of James Barnes (6), who was married on May 3, and that same evening, he and his new bride “made our way for America [or] in other words to the Land of promise [or] the land of Zion.”¹²⁰ Interestingly, Barnes and his wife were not on a U.S.-bound ship; instead, they sailed to Quebec, traveling from there to Buffalo and then Nauvoo. Nonetheless, although their initial destination was not the U.S., they associated their travel with America—the “Land of promise,” the “land of Zion.” Edwards Phillips (8), another 1841 Quebec-bound passenger, wrote that he “left [his] home to emigrate to America” and “boarded the *Caroline*, for America.”¹²¹ Thomas Quayle (5), who emigrated in 1841, characterized the journey as “going to the Land of Promise—to America.”¹²² Richard Bentley (9), an 1841 emigrant, wrote of his decision to “go to America.”¹²³ Charles Smith (26), an 1843 emigrant, wrote of turning his face “Zion-ward” as he “prepare[d]

119. It is worth noting that the Latter-day Saints were not the only people who viewed the United States as a “promised land,” of sorts; a wide array of emigrant groups were moving westward across the North American continent at this time, including gold seekers, railroad tycoons, and Russian Jewish immigrants. For a more complete examination of the Latter-day Saints’ place in the nineteenth-century westward expansion, see Christina A. Ziegler-McPherson, “Selling the Promised Land: Religious and Philanthropic Promotion,” in *Selling America: Immigration Promotion and the Settlement of the American Continent, 1607–1914* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger Press, 2017), 57–71.

120. “James Barnes diary, 1840 August–1841 June,” microfiche, MS 1870, Church History Library.

121. “Autobiographical Sketch of Edward Phillips,” Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/197>, emphasis original.

122. “God and Gold—1847,” in Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 16:490.

123. “Autobiography of Richard Bentley,” Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1204>.

to emigrate to America.”¹²⁴ Emigrant John Nelson Harper (24) in 1843 “decided to gather with the Saints in the land of America.”¹²⁵ Emigrant Christopher Layton (23), onboard a boat in 1843 “en route for America,” wrote that as he and his fellow passengers “slowly saw the land disappear in the distance we sang one of the songs of Zion and cheered each other with sympathizing words.”¹²⁶

Among the most lucid of the America-as-promised-land descriptions was written by 1841 passenger Thomas Callister (12), who—as previously mentioned—heard Parley P. Pratt point to an American flag and note it represented a “land of liberty” and “of plenty.”¹²⁷

In the journals written in 1846 and before, there are frequent references to America in this vein—as a land of prosperity and liberty. But during this period, Latter-day Saints in the U.S. were facing serious persecutions by both vigilante groups and state-sanctioned mobs.¹²⁸ The American Saints began preparations to leave Illinois in 1846 and to move west, beyond U.S. territory.

Gathering to a Community

It is at this mark—when companies of Latter-day Saints began the trek westward into Mexican territory beyond the United States’ border—that there was a subtle shift in emigrants’ descriptions of Zion. Of the

124. “Reminiscences and Diary of Charles Smith,” Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1176>.

125. “Autobiography of John Nelson Harper,” Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1173>.

126. “Autobiography of Christopher Layton,” Saints by Sea, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu/mii/account/1174>.

127. “Collection of Reminiscences of Thomas Callister.”

128. It is unclear how much the missionaries in Britain and, in turn, their converts understood about the persecutions American Latter-day Saints faced. For example, Joseph Smith visited President Martin Van Buren in 1839 to seek redress for the Latter-day Saints’ hardships in Missouri, but Van Buren’s unwillingness to help left Smith disillusioned (and likely played an instrumental role in inspiring Smith’s subsequent 1844 presidential campaign). This experience conflicts with Pratt’s effusive praise of the American flag as a symbol of the “land of liberty.” Missionaries and converts in Britain were likely not apprised of Smith’s June 1844 death until the fall of that year; the first known correspondence advising British Saints of Smith’s death was a letter written by Orson Hyde on July 10, 1844. See “Letter from Elder Orson Hyde,” *Millennial Star* 5, no. 4 (September 1844): 14. For more on the Latter-day Saints’ disenchantment with the U.S. government and Smith’s subsequent presidential campaign, see Spencer W. McBride, *Joseph Smith for President: The Prophet, the Assassins, and the Fight for American Religious Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

thirty-two accounts I studied written by pre-1846 emigrants, one-third wrote of “America” as their destination, with many linking the U.S. with Zion; of the post-1846 writings, there is not a single mention of America, despite every passenger sailing on ships that arrived in Boston, New Orleans, New York, or Philadelphia. In these writings, no longer was Zion connected with a political state (the United States) or geographical location; instead, references to Zion were more frequently linked to community (often gathering “with the Saints”). A pertinent example is 1857 emigrant Ann Prior Jarvis (49), who wrote that her migratory desires were not tethered to a specific locale, but to wherever the Saints were gathered. She arrived in the U.S. on a Boston-bound ship, but she “dreaded living in Boston,” she wrote. “If it had been a city of Saints I might have felt different.”¹²⁹

Once Utah was solidified as the new gathering place, some emigrants reverted to connecting Zion with a place, but these references are few. More frequent is the use of “Zion” as the blanket term describing the destination. An 1851 emigrant, Charlotte Jarrold Hyder (37), the daughter of the first female convert in Cambridge,¹³⁰ wrote while aboard a ship: “Although I long to see my friends in Cambridge, I console myself in the thought that I am going to Zion, the promised land. Oh! glorious thought.”¹³¹ The same year, John Moon (3)—who had already emigrated—encouraged those preparing to leave Britain by conflating Zion with “the kingdom of God”: “You must expect great tribulation in the way to Zion for those who John saw had come through much

129. “Autobiography of Ann Prior Jarvis,” 10, MS 8620, reel 12, no. 6, Church History Library.

130. The case of the Hyder family is an interesting—and somewhat disputed—one. Former Church President Gordon B. Hinckley’s wife, Marjorie Pay, descended from Charlotte Jarrold Hyder. Charlotte’s father, Richard Hyder, was believed to be the dyer and tailor for Queen Victoria and the royal family, and after his death, his late wife, Sarah, joined the Church with her daughters (Ann Eliza, Charlotte, and Martha). When relating their story, Marjorie P. Hinckley claimed Sarah “was the first woman to be baptized in Cambridge.” The late Cambridge historian Leonard Reed disputes this: “This is probably not the case. William Goates’ wife Susan, who was baptized in July 1844, almost certainly preceded Sarah, and as there are no surviving nineteenth century records of the Cambridge LDS Branch, it is difficult to know who was baptized after her and when the baptisms occurred.” See Gordon B. Hinckley and Marjorie P. Hinckley, *The Wondrous Power of a Mother* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 11; Reed, *Living Latter-day Saint History in Cambridgeshire*, 18.

131. From Charlotte Jarrold Hyder’s diary, March 10, 1851, as quoted in “Biography of Charlotte Jarrold Hyder Evans, 1834–1906,” FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/photos/artifacts/136130565>.

tribulation and I do not know any way but one that leads to the kingdom of God,” he wrote. “But I can say with truth that if things had been 10 times worse than was I would just have gone right ahead through all.”¹³² In 1853, Peter McIntyre (39) connected “the land of Zion” with “Salt Lake City, Utah the city of refuge where the house of the Lord is to be built on the top of the mountains, according to ancient prophecies; where all the seed of Abraham will be gathered, to fulfill the promise of God to our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”¹³³

Other Saints took to poetry when describing Zion, like this additional verse penned by Matthew Rowan (45):

O flee to Zion’s land all ye saints, now haste away;
 For there shall be salvation, as holy prophets say;
 For the day of warning hies! And the judgements soon will come,
 Which will marke the wicked mourn, when the Saints go home.
 When the Saints go home, when the Saints go home,
 When the day of warning’s past, and the Saints all home.¹³⁴

Rowan’s emphasis on Zion as the “home” of the “saints” is emblematic of the common belief among emigrants of his era that the gathering place would be a refuge for the faithful. Even those whose lives were jeopardized by their emigration often found comfort in the idea of Zion. Mary Goble (48), whose mother lost her life while journeying to Utah in 1855, described some of her mother’s final words: “Polly, I want to go to Zion while my children are small, so they can be raised in the Gospel of Christ, for I know it is the true church.”¹³⁵ Prior to 1846, discussion of Zion was linked to geography or a political state; after 1846, when the Saints moved west, the idea of Zion was untethered from a physical place and became near-synonymous with the community of Saints.

Conclusion

If accounts written by emigrants in their diaries, autobiographies, and letters are to be taken at face value, one can credibly surmise that the spiritual and economic motivations for emigrating were not divorced in the Mormon mind. These Latter-day Saint migrants were driven by a host of

132. Quoted in Allen, “We Had a Very Hard Voyage for the Season.”

133. “Peter McIntyre Autobiography,” 28–29.

134. Rowan, “Poetry Book,” 5. A more complete treatment of poetry composed by Latter-day Saint emigrants between 1840 and 1890 was written by William H. Brugger, “Mormon Maritime Migration in Meter” (PhD diss., Drew University, 2007).

135. Mary Goble Pay, “A Noble Pioneer,” in Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 13:436.

potential reasons, and we see references to many of these in their writings. Often they were meticulous in recording their emigration, because it was (alongside baptism) an inflection point in their lives—a “watershed, the reference point . . . against which all else was to be assessed,” as historian J. F. C. Harrison described it.¹³⁶ Utilizing their first-person accounts for our study, instead of other secondary sources, allows for a clear-eyed understanding of what motivated (or what they claimed motivated) their life-changing emigration.

The accounts in this dataset yield several findings, chief among them that temporal and spiritual motives were deeply intertwined in the minds of early Latter-day Saint British emigrants. Even when writing about the temporal aspects of their migration—such as economic factors and the countries of departure and of arrival—the emigrants often overlaid these with spiritual or religious language and symbolism. Thus, divorcing these factors (the spiritual and the temporal) is difficult. Several other patterns emerge in the study of these accounts. First, when discussing economic factors, emigrants often wrote in a language of millenarian belief, such as referring to the United Kingdom as “Babylon” and the U.S. as a refuge. Second, the allure of charismatic authority (prophets) or communication with God was influential, and emigrants often spoke of revelation from Deity as a motive for their emigration. Third, the doctrine of “gathering” was central to their decision-making, though the focus of where the “gathering” would take place shifted during this time span. While early emigrants viewed Zion and America as synonymous, later emigrants stopped writing about America as their destination and instead focused on Zion as a community of Saints.

Migration is an incredibly complex process; it was especially so in the nineteenth century. The decision to emigrate from Great Britain and board a ship to the New World almost certainly meant a permanent goodbye to the emigrant’s homeland and all that remained there, including (as it so often did) family and friends. The process of gauging the motives for this life-altering decision is likewise complex, and it is admittedly an inherently imperfect science. I do not claim that my findings are true for all samples of British Latter-day Saint emigrants, only that they are the result of a close reading of this dataset. It is impossible to know the expected audience for the emigrants’ accounts, their motivation for writing, or the accuracy of their memory when they wrote retrospective autobiographies; thus, my findings should be taken for what they are: an analysis of the writings, as *they* are.

136. Harrison, “Popular History,” 13.

There is room for further study in the same vein as I have attempted. I studied accounts from the first two decades of British Latter-day Saint emigration; three decades of study remain, with hundreds (and potentially thousands) of first-person migrant accounts available for analysis. A careful reader of journals from 1860 to 1890 would be wise to pay heed to how the end of Latter-day Saint isolation, especially due to the arrival of transcontinental rail passengers, affected migration. Further, Britain was not the lone destination from which Latter-day Saint emigrants departed; migration flowed from other parts of Europe, Canada, the Pacific islands, and elsewhere, and many of these emigrants wrote of their experiences as well.

As a final note, although Church leaders no longer call on new converts to migrate to a centralized location, Latter-day Saint migration continues.¹³⁷ Professor Jane Lopez at Brigham Young University and others have begun the important academic work of studying recent migrants and analyzing their social integration into Utah communities or other predominantly Latter-day Saint areas.¹³⁸ How we view these modern migrants can be mirrored by our discoveries of nineteenth-century emigrants: they are complex individuals with many variables playing into their decisions to migrate. Their motives cannot be fairly categorized into one or two buckets. The modern reader should recognize today's migrants as similarly complex and recognize that perceived motives are rarely complete.

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137. In 1972, Elder Bruce R. McConkie discouraged Saints in Mexico from migrating to Utah: "Every nation is the gathering place for its own people," he said. Church presidents—including Harold B. Lee and Spencer W. Kimball—repeated this counsel. See "Gathering Is in Fulfillment of Prophecy," *Church News*, March 6, 1993, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/1993/3/6/23258626/gathering-is-in-fulfillment-of-prophecy>.

138. See Jane Lilly Lopez and others, "Shades of Belonging: The Intersection of Race and Religion in Utah Immigrants' Social Integration," *Social Sciences* 10, no. 7 (2021): 241, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10070246>; Claudia Soto Saavedra and others, "'It Happened When I Was Connecting to the Community . . .': Multiple Pathways to Migrant (Non)Belonging in a New Destination Setting," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20, no. 3 (January 2023): 2172, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20032172>.

APPENDIX

Diaries, Autobiographies, and Letters of LDS British Emigrants,
1840–1860

No.	Year	Name	Gender	Age	Account type	Ports, <i>Ship</i>
1	1840	William Clayton	M	26	Letter	Liverpool to New York, <i>North America</i>
2	1840	Mary Haskin Parker Richards	F	17	Diary	Liverpool to New York, <i>Alliance</i>
3	1840	John Moon	M	30	Letter	Liverpool to New York, <i>Britannia</i>
4	1841	Edward Ockey	M	25	Autobiography	Liverpool to New York, <i>Rochester</i>
5	1841	Thomas Quayle	M	6	Autobiography	Liverpool to New York, <i>Rochester</i>
6	1841	James Barnes	M	26	Diary	Bristol to Quebec, <i>Harmony</i>
7	1841	Mary Ann Weston Maughan	F	24	Diary, autobiography	Bristol to Quebec, <i>Harmony</i>
8	1841	Edward Phillips	M	28	Autobiography	Bristol to Quebec, <i>Caroline</i>
9	1841	Richard Bentley	M	21	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Tyrian</i>
10	1841	Robert Pixton	M	22	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Tyrian</i>
11	1841	Joseph Fielding	M	44	Letter	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Tyrian</i>
12	1842	Thomas Callister	M	20	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Tremont</i>
13	1842	Robert Crookston	M	21	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Sidney</i>
14	1842	George Cannon	M	15	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Sidney</i>

No.	Year	Name	Gender	Age	Account type	Ports, Ship
15	1842	John Greenhow	M	33	Letter	Liverpool to New Orleans, Sidney
16	1842	David Candland	M	23	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, Medford
17	1842	Edward Tolton	M	21	Letter	Liverpool to New Orleans, Medford
18	1842	James Burgess	M	24	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, Henry
19	1842	Alfred Cordon	M	25	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, Henry
20	1842	Thomas Wrigley	M	26	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, Emerald
21	1842	Nicholas Thomas Silcock	M	23	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, Emerald
22	1842	William Greenwood	M	23	Autobiography	Liverpool to New York, Rochester
23	1843	Christopher Layton	M	29	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, James Pennell
24	1843	John Nelson Harper	M	21	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, Swanton
25	1843	Robert Reid	M	32	Letter	Liverpool to New Orleans, Swanton
26	1843	Charles Smith	M	23	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, Swanton
27	1843	George Spilsbury	M	20	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, Yorkshire
28	1843	William Rowley	M	40	Letter	Liverpool to New Orleans, Metoka
29	1843	Thomas Steed	M	17	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, Fanny

No.	Year	Name	Gender	Age	Account type	Ports, Ship
30	1844	William Adams	M	22	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Fanny</i>
31	1844	Priscilla Staines	M	21	Autobiography	Liverpool to New York, <i>Wyoming</i>
32	1845	George Whitaker	M	25	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Palmyra</i>
33	1845	Ann Hughlings Pitchforth	F	44	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Palmyra</i>
34	1848	Henry Emery	M	23	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Carnatic</i>
35	1848	William Carruth	M	22	Autobiography, diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Carnatic</i>
36	1849	Henry Dinwoodey	M	23	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Berlin</i>
37	1851	Charlotte Jarrold Hyder	F	17	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Olympus</i>
38	1852	William Goates Sr.	M	34	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Ellen Maria</i>
39	1853	Peter McIntyre	M	62	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Falcon</i>
40	1853	Hannah Tapfield King	F	45	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Golconda</i>
41	1853	William J. Owens	M	26	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Golconda</i>
42	1854	William Jex	M	23	Autobiography	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Windermere</i>
43	1854	William Athole MacMaster	M	38	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>John M. Wood</i>
44	1854	Frederick Chadwick Andrew	M	34	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>John M. Wood</i>

No.	Year	Name	Gender	Age	Account type	Ports, <i>Ship</i>
45	1854	Mary Margaret Forquhar Cruickshank Morrison	F	30	Diary	Liverpool to New Orleans, <i>Germanicus</i>
46	1855	Matthew Rowan	M	28	Diary, songbook	Liverpool to New York, <i>Samuel Curling</i>
47	1855	Jane Charters Robinson Hindley	F	27	Journal	Liverpool to Philadelphia, <i>Siddons</i>
48	1856	Mary Goble	F	12	Autobiography	Liverpool to Boston, <i>Horizon</i>
49	1857	Ann Prior Jarvis	F	28	Autobiography	Liverpool to Boston, <i>George Washington</i>
50	1860	Thomas Williams	M	23	Letter	Liverpool to New York, <i>William Topscott</i>