

# The Story of the British Saints in Their Own Words, 1900–50

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During the first half of the twentieth century, the image of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was so negative in the British Isles that members faced significant persecution because of their beliefs and testimonies. Families ostracized new converts of the Lord's Church from the warmth and love of their homes. Friends abandoned the Latter-day Saints because they believed in such doctrines as modern revelation, prophets, ministering angels, and visits from God the Father and His Son. In addition to being ostracized from those who once loved them, the converts who stayed behind in the British Isles witnessed a massive immigration of faithful Saints to America. Abandoned by old friends and family and left behind by their new friends, early British Saints were forced to stand alone when they became covenant disciples of Christ. These stalwart members kept the Church alive during the difficult times of the early twentieth century. In many ways, they sacrificed everything so the Church could survive and have a strong foundation for the periods of growth that lay ahead.

Historians who write of this difficult era are not alone in this conclusion; the Saints who actually lived through those trials and tribulations also testify of the sacrifices they made for the early Church. Their testimonies are recorded in Brigham Young University's British Latter-day Saints Oral History Project. The introduction for this project states:

As part of Brigham Young University's commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles in 1987, the university sponsored an oral history project designed to help document the experiences of British Latter-day Saints in the twentieth century. . . . Men and women were interviewed who lived in a variety of locations in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern

Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and on the Isle of Man. Most of these interviewees had been Latter-day Saints for many years.<sup>1</sup>

This invaluable collection offers inspiring testimonies, experiences, and explanations of the history of the Church in the British Isles from the early 1900s until 1987. These powerful narratives allow members to share, in their own words, their experiences in the Church they loved and represented. They eloquently shared their love and respect for the gospel, their testimonies and wisdom, their joys and sorrows, and their successes and failures as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This chapter reviews common threads in the oral histories located in the Church Archives and also in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University. I have taken stories from over one hundred interviews to illustrate the lives of these dedicated Saints, who emphasized, in a united voice, the high cost of discipleship in the British Isles during the early twentieth century. Despite such difficulty, these Saints affirmed a willingness to pay the necessary cost. Because of their resolute determination to serve the Lord and remain earnestly committed to His gospel, they received bounteous blessings as members of the Lord's Church.

### **Persecution of a Peculiar People**

Polygamy was the key issue forming the British people's view of the Church and its members. Until the 1950s, the common attitude was that Mormons could not be trusted because they were polygamists and their missionaries' only purpose was to abduct British girls to become polygamist wives in Utah. This led to violence against Church members and especially the missionaries. Propaganda against the Church became rampant, both in the tabloids and in reputable newspapers. To sell their books, novelists sensationalized this theme of the abduction and sexual harassment of British girls. In 1914, as a result of this heated controversy, the British Parliament debated whether to expel all Latter-day Saints. Although the Saints were not expelled, the lives of active members were dramatically affected by these issues. Members of the Lord's Church experienced

persecution and discovered that living their religion in Great Britain in the early twentieth century came at a high price.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the oral history project, the Saints spoke of reasons they were persecuted. Many emphasized the issue of polygamy. Joan Thorpe of Thurlaston, Warwickshire, England, emphasized that the English were afraid of the Mormons. Many of Joan's family and friends came to her while she was being taught by the missionaries and told her horrible stories regarding the Church. She had two aunts who were very much against the Church, and when the missionaries came to teach Joan, the aunts were scandalized because they thought the missionaries were going to abduct their niece. Joan clarified the attitude of that era: "People around did think we were rather odd. . . . We did get a lot of opposition from the local churches. . . . Three ministers of three Church of England churches . . . wrote in their parish magazine that whatever people were to do, they were not to let the Mormons into their homes. . . . This was really nasty opposition."<sup>3</sup>

Joan Cooper of Derby, England, said she knew very little of the Mormons before she and her husband were contacted by the missionaries: "The only thing that I've heard about the Mormons was that they were polygamists.' I didn't think of them as being a church group. I just thought it was a group of people that practiced polygamy. That's all I knew." She reminisced that when she and her husband, Gordon, investigated the Church and accepted the doctrines as true, their families rebelled. She explained:

[Gordon's brother] didn't speak to us for about two or three years, because we'd joined the Church. He just thought we were weird. And Gordon's mum said, "I don't mind any church but that church." You know, it had really got a bad name. . . . [We] were persecuted, really. I think it comes down from the early 1900s. Gordon's dad was still alive when we joined the Church, and he remembered these elders coming round years ago, and that's when [the Church] got a bad name, when they used to say that [the missionaries had] taken all the young girls and sent them to Salt Lake. [Gordon's dad] was really dead against [us joining]. . . . [The Mormons] didn't have a good name in that generation.<sup>4</sup>

Members who were interviewed offered other reasons the British persecuted the Latter-day Saints. For instance, some Saints felt

the Church's doctrine was at odds with British values and lifestyles. Other members stressed that the British viewed the Church as an American church at a time when the British could hardly tolerate anything American.

Gordon William Sherlock noted that the British had difficulty with the Ts of Mormon doctrine: tea, tobacco, tithing, and temples. He said many British citizens were unable to make the sacrifices asked for by the Church.<sup>5</sup>

Warrick Kear, former president of the Cheltenham Stake, went into more detail. He emphasized that the British people "are very insular and tend to be traditional and feel safe in tradition. . . . They don't like change." Therefore, the British mistrusted a church that taught the necessity of a "mighty change of heart" and expected a total rebirth of the individual. The Church was resented because it challenged traditional British values and lifestyles. For example, the working class was challenged by the Church's emphasis on the importance of the eternal family and of being a dedicated spouse and parent. Brother Kear described the nuances of British culture that he felt were in conflict with Church doctrines:

[The "pub culture" is] a major problem in the whole of the British Isles. . . . You take an average man these days; . . . his whole social life often revolves around the pub. . . . He will probably have [a spouse and] two or three children. . . . His whole life will be geared towards making enough money to support his family, and then his social life revolves around his mates, usually down at the pub. British society is not geared to the youth. There's nothing for the youth. All the youth have is the chip shop or the pub to congregate in, or they make a nuisance of themselves in the streets.

He also emphasized that the Church and its doctrine were at odds with the wealthier British citizens:

You've then got the middle classes, and unfortunately in the British Isles I think there still are these class divisions. You've got the middle classes who literally are obsessed with making money to pay for their very high mortgages. And the Church comes along and says to them, "We want to take 10 percent of that away. And as well, you've got to give up all your social friends, or a lot of them," because there again it revolves around the pub, weekends for drinks, holidays in France, and just keeping up with the Joneses. We're not making big inroads [with the middle classes] there either.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, certain Church members feel that one of the significant reasons the gospel was persecuted in the British Isles was that its doctrine is so contrary to traditional British values. The British resented the perceived assault upon their traditions and would not tolerate these unique Mormon doctrines that seek change. Because of this, they responded with fear and anger that led to persecution of the Church.

Richard Marcus Manuel of Leicester, England, explained that in Britain and Europe the Church is seen as an American church, which belief contributed to persecution of the Saints in the British Isles: “I don’t think the Americans are particularly well liked, anyway. I can’t really pin down the precise reason why. After all, America got us back on our feet after World War II. The American [seems] to need to sell himself. He’s an extroverted character who seems to have done everything bigger and better than everybody else. Your average Brit is a very much more introverted character. He won’t talk about himself and come out of his shell very easily. There’s this . . . clash of personalities.”<sup>77</sup>

Manuel went on to explain that Britains have a hard time accepting American missionaries and that even German missionaries are better received, even though Germany was a British enemy during World War II. Whatever the cause of the persecution, the Saints that lived through those days testified that their trials and tribulations were real. Their accounts of personal sacrifice and the high cost of discipleship were captured again and again in the narratives of the Saints. Persecution became a way of life for the Saints in the British Isles in the first half of the twentieth century.

Sister Joy Walker told of a man in her neighborhood who superstitiously felt Mormons were the cause of all the problems he was experiencing in his life. When his car stopped working, he blamed Sister Walker and threw bottles through her windows. She concluded her story: “So in the end I just prayed to the Lord and then said [to the man] that he’d have to stop . . . and at [that] moment he [was] quiet.”<sup>78</sup> Many members declared that there was a fantastic amount of opposition to a temple being built in England. Others accentuated the harsh persecution of the Church’s missionaries. Albert Roy spoke of the opposition he received in his community,

especially from the Church of Scotland, which disseminated anti-Mormon books and pamphlets.<sup>9</sup> However, Albert Sunderland put this persecution into perspective: “It was tough. But strength came from it, because it was hard, because our people had to be united.”<sup>10</sup> Throughout his and others’ accounts, the British Saints emphasized that the persecution they experienced united them with the Lord and with each other.

Lucy Ripley idolized her mother, Alice Scaife, because Alice had the courage to raise her children as Latter-day Saints at a time when it was very dangerous to do so in the British Isles. Lucy explained that her mother was baptized in Bradford in 1893 when she was only sixteen, and because of her baptism her parents turned her out of her home. Alice lived with a family named Briggs until she married James William Ripley. They had eight children. James joined the Church but soon became inactive. Through her dedication and commitment to the gospel, Alice made sure her eight children were all baptized. However, helping her children achieve this wonderful goal was indeed difficult. Her husband hoped that Alice and her children would drift away from the gospel, but they never did because of Alice’s faithful tenacity.

Alice had no money, but she saved enough from the household budget for the bus fares needed to take her little family to church. Since they were not able to attend very often, Alice taught her children gospel principles during the week. However, Alice would not mention the Church in the home. Alice’s daughter Lucy clarified her mother’s reasons: “We weren’t told anything about Mormonism. In fact, we didn’t even know Mormonism existed when we were young. My mother taught us to be good, to say our prayers, but she didn’t teach us the gospel. I think the reason was she didn’t want us to be looked down on by people because the persecution was bad at that time. The Mormons were really looked down upon.” So Alice bided her time, and though they did not know it, her children were being raised as Latter-day Saints.

Alice’s patience was finally rewarded in 1920 when the missionaries returned to England after World War I. Her daughter Lucy observed:

Because our names were on the records of the Batley Branch, Yorkshire, they came to our house looking us up—at that time I was

fourteen—and they invited us to come to church. So we started going. My father said, “It’s just a whim they’ve got. They’ll go so long and then they’ll drift away.” My mother talked to us and she said, “I want you to let your dad see that it isn’t a whim you’ve got, that you’re going to keep to the Church.” We three sisters said, “We’re going to keep to the Church.” And we’ve all kept in the Church. We’ve worked in the Church all our lives.

Lucy said that persecution then became a theme of her family’s lives while they attended church regularly. They experienced the subtle persecution of their father, who discouraged them from being Mormons, but they also experienced real, tangible persecution of taunts and thrown stones, prejudice, and bigotry. Lucy spoke of the boys of her neighborhood who would shout derisively, “Mormon, Mormon” and throw stones and snowballs. Even Lucy’s best friend Miriam never spoke to her again after she returned to the Church. She said, “The persecution was very bad up in Sunderland in the early days. Missionaries were lodging in a certain house, and a mob gathered outside and told the people who owned the house if they didn’t get rid of the Mormons, they’d burn the house down. The police had to intervene.” She continued: “There was a tremendous amount of persecution from the Vicars of the Church of England. They would warn their members against being friendly to the Mormons, and they would tell lies against the missionaries.” But even with the persecution, Lucy expressed tremendous gratitude for her dear mother who had sacrificed to ensure that her daughter was a member of the Lord’s true Church: “My mother was baptized here in Bradford in 1893. We learned after she died—she never told us—that her parents turned her out of their home. . . . [Because of her] we eight children were all born in the Church. . . . How thankful I am to my dear mother who recognized the truth so many years ago and had the courage to accept it under such difficulties.”<sup>11</sup>

Mavis Oxley also spoke of her mother, who sacrificed so that she and her child might be members of the Church: “[My mother] very often tells me that when they used to have street meetings and [the antagonists would] throw stones at the missionaries, . . . somebody would say, ‘Come on, hurry up! They’re stoning the missionaries. Let’s run and stick up for them.’ The few Saints [that] there were

used to run out and help the missionaries.” Mavis also experienced intense persecution because of her religion, yet never backed down and always represented well the Church that she and her mother loved. She indicated that the persecution in her life often turned very hostile: “We’ve been ridiculed for a long long time. It’s only these last fifteen or twenty years that we haven’t been.” She explained that she was a supervisor in a biscuit factory in charge of five hundred girls. She remembered:

They all knew I was a Mormon, and I used to get ragged terribly. They used to do awful things to me, even though I was in charge. . . . We used to have little firesides in our home, and I used to invite the girls from the factory to come. . . . I got quite a few of the girls interested in the Church, especially if the missionaries were attractive. . . . I never overstepped the mark . . . but I did get quite a lot of girls interested that way. . . . A lot of them went away with a favorable opinion of the Church, so that when the missionaries knocked on their doors, they’d say, “Oh, I know about them,” and talk to the missionaries.<sup>12</sup>

Quietly, members like Mavis who were faithful to their beliefs and courageous in their own way slowly helped their friends and enemies change and feel different regarding the Church.

Others who recorded their testimonies and their stories on tape shared stories of persecution during the early 1900s. James Edward Perry stated: “They were building their own chapel. . . . They were having a lot of problems with local troublemakers. In fact, the building supervisor was beaten up one night and had a lot of bricks thrown at him by a gang and was left for dead. He ended up in the hospital.”<sup>13</sup>

Albert Sunderland remembered how his brother George joined the Church and taught Albert the gospel. From the very beginning, Albert knew the gospel was true, saying: “My thoughts went along with the understanding of the Church of Jesus Christ.” However, he didn’t want to join because he was a member of the Salvation Army and would be forced to leave. He waited two years before he had the courage to be baptized, but his earlier conviction eventually motivated him to unite with the Saints in 1951. His real struggles then began. His devout Christian friends ridiculed him. He said he

lost hundreds of those friends—people with whom he had studied the Bible and served the poor and afflicted.<sup>14</sup>

The youth of the Church were also victimized and abused because of their religion. Warrick Kear shared a poignant story of persecution from his past:

I remember one day the teacher decided we would do some comparative religious studies, and we had a book which had a chapter on Mormonism in it. I was incensed by this chapter, because it was bad and it was inaccurate. And I was to give a five-minute presentation to the class on Mormonism. The teacher was not very kind to me at all. But being just a . . . twelve-year-old greenie, I couldn't answer him back and I ended up just saying, "Well, I know it's true anyway." And with a scarlet face, feeling terribly embarrassed, I recall sitting down on my chair wishing the ground would just cover me up.

He also highlighted the hounding he received from his peers as a university student and how his colleagues were always challenging his convictions and ridiculing his religion. They ganged up on him and mocked him until he got so frustrated that he barged out of the room, not knowing what to say or do. They constantly harassed him to drink and to have sex; they once slipped liquor into his drink when he didn't know it, and he ended up drunk and quite sick. Though Warrick longed for good friends in college, he learned he could not always trust those who claimed to be his friends.<sup>15</sup>

Craig Lithgow Marshall said that even dating relationships were negatively affected:

Barbara Appleby . . . was brought out to church by a friend. . . . I was instantly impressed by her, instantly. I like to think it was the Spirit telling me this was my future wife, but I think I'm reading too much into it to say that. . . . I think she felt the Spirit and she probably recognized the truth—if not instantly, then certainly after a few weeks. . . .

Her mother was very strongly Catholic. . . . And the LDS Church had a very poor image at the time. When [her mother and stepfather] found out she was going to church, they raised all sorts of objections and difficulties, which actually became quite bitter. . . .

When it was evident that [Barbara] was becoming serious about the Church, then sparks began to fly. My wife has a very strong personality, and she wasn't too ready to accede to her parents' feelings about it. So she came out to church for long periods covertly. . . .

When [her parents] found that she was very closely associating with me, that caused problems too. There was a number of scenes and difficulties. I remember once being thrown out of the house by her father, [being] shouted at and being told never to come back again: "Don't darken this doorstep," and all of this kind of thing. . . .

She wasn't able to be baptized until [she was] seventeen or eighteen. . . . Her parents were very much opposed to it. And she actually left home . . . and was living elsewhere. . . . But it didn't stop her. . . .

She was attending a Catholic grammar school. . . . You can imagine the kind of difficulties and problems that would cause for someone who was being converted to the Mormon faith. . . . She was quite a strong little girl.

Craig explained how they fell deeply in love and later married. Even though Barbara's parents aggressively fought the Church, they now fully accept Craig as a son-in-law.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Derek Lewis Parry, former president of the Cardiff Wales Stake, told a story graphically illustrating how divisive the gospel became for families in the British Isles. Sister Annie McFarland of Coventry was married to a man who was bitterly hostile to the Church. Sister McFarland "was totally dedicated to the Church," but because of her husband's opposition, it was difficult to attend meetings. She wanted dearly to take her family to church and to teach her children the gospel properly. So she got the Primary and Sunday School manuals and taught her children all the lessons when her husband was at work. She did this for years, but the father never changed. He was "objectionable, totally anti-social, totally hostile." Annie was becoming very concerned regarding the younger children because she couldn't attend church. One time she decided to go on a vacation, but her husband wouldn't go with the family. The vacation turned out to be wonderful because for two weeks the whole family could go to church. When they got home, her husband was dead. He had collapsed suddenly, having no history of bad health.

Over the years, her children have been active in the Church. Her oldest daughter, a returned missionary, married a member of another faith, but because of Annie's strong influence, her daughter's new husband joined the Church. They are very active, and he is a member of the bishopric in Tamworth. One of her other children is a branch president.

Annie has been able to go to the temple. The Lord's influence in many little things brought this about, because she was totally dedicated. Despite all her trials and tribulations, she raised every one of her children in the Church, yet "she wouldn't have been able to do that had her husband continued to live."<sup>17</sup>

These British Saints were willing to give their all so that the gospel could be part of their lives, and they drew a direct correlation between the persecution and personal sacrifice they experienced and the gaining of a solid testimony of the gospel.

When they were first baptized, their testimonies were very fragile, yet the more they tried to live the gospel, the more their testimonies grew. Ironically, their trials and tribulations strengthened their testimonies.

### **Thousands Immigrate to America**

To complicate the effects of the persecution heaped upon the Church, the matter of emigration added to the Saints' troubles. "Emigration was the recommended pattern" for the Latter-day Saints in the British Isles from the very beginning in 1837. "From 1847 to 1869 more than 32,000 British and Irish converts" left for America, and as emigration continued through the early twentieth century, Church membership in the British Isles plummeted from 9,000 to 2,600.<sup>18</sup>

At the dawning of the twentieth century, emigration had taken the established leaders and most of the vibrant converts to America as they sought the full blessings of the Church that were only offered there. The few remaining Saints faced the daunting task of representing the Lord and His gospel with scant resources in this powerful nation. Yet these Saints, as a tiny army fighting overwhelming odds, kept His Church alive. Elder Derek Cuthbert described the emphasis on emigration when he first joined the Church in January 1951:

There was a stream of emigrants during the '50s. Certainly when we joined the Church, conditions in England were very tight. In fact, even five-and-a-half years after the Second World War was over, we were still on rationing. . . . There was little private building and conditions were quite austere. So for those who emigrated, I suppose there was not only

the desire to be near a temple, but also the desire for perhaps a more prosperous way of life. . . .

When we joined the Church, there were 6,500 members in the whole of the British Isles. Officially the records state that 80,000 had joined the Church and emigrated. But, in addition to that, there were many, many others who just made their own arrangements. So probably there would be 100,000 British Saints who had joined the Church and emigrated between 1851 and 1951.<sup>19</sup>

The Saints who were left behind spoke of the meager resources of the Church in England during that era. Brother James Sherlock remembered that when he and his family were new members, they had to attend church at Unity Hall, a men's club known for smoking and drinking. Every Sunday morning they had to empty all the ashtrays and throw out the beer bottles before church could begin. His earliest memories were of a very small branch where there were only three priesthood holders. He remembered the sacrament trays of beautiful mahogany and how he would very carefully wash the glass sacrament cups.<sup>20</sup> His father, Gordon, also remembered that time: "We met in the Unity Hall. . . . They'd had it for union meetings, and we used to have to sweep the cigarette ends up and the beer bottles . . . and open the windows, where we could, to get a bit of fresh air in. . . . But we managed. We were quite a happy bunch. In fact, they were happy days. We were all learning together, because it was like the start-up of the branch . . . just after the war."<sup>21</sup>

Joan Thorpe asserted that her early Church experiences were similar: "We hired a . . . St. John's Ambulance Hall [for our meetings]. . . . They used to have beery parties the night before. . . . Before we could start our meetings we would have to sweep up the cigarette ends and push away the bottle tops." She explained how the Saints in her area tired of this routine and desired to have a chapel of their own. Sister Thorpe spoke of this dream of having a chapel: "The Lord knew we needed help. We did need help, because we were very small." "Eventually the Lord was with us, and I'm sure we couldn't have had a better site [for our chapel] than the one we got. . . . We feel the Lord knew we wanted that spot, and that's why we got it."<sup>22</sup>

Mavis Oxley spoke of the new chapel she helped build:

The time the chapel was being built . . . was a great time. We all worked like mad, saving up. We had parties. We had dances. We had all sorts of events to raise money for the building fund. . . . It came time for us all to go to work. I used to work at the factory, and I used to belt home on my cycle and quickly have a meal and then get down to the chapel ground and we'd heave bricks and we'd help the men do the building. All the ladies joined in. It was great. We'd go for a weekend, just have our Sunday meetings, and the rest of the weekend we'd all work and sing. It was really lovely. We helped on our own [cause].<sup>23</sup>

Another obvious effect of the vast emigration was that the small number of Saints left behind struggled to keep the programs of the Church alive. “A lot of people were being baptized, but a lot of people were emigrating to America,” Albert Sunderland recalled. He continued: “People would . . . become faithful in the Church, and then they'd move out to America. This was probably our biggest problem at that time and one of the reasons why England stayed so small in numbers as it did.”<sup>24</sup> James Sherlock also shed light upon this era of emigration and its effect: “What people typically did is they joined the Church and then they emigrated to the States. The call was there. This was . . . going on for well over a century. . . . We were a bit of an anomaly in not leaving.” He went on to explain that before the temple was built in 1958, members almost had to leave to have the full blessings of the gospel. People joined the Church, but the membership didn't increase because so many emigrated. However, when the temple was built, the emigration stopped.<sup>25</sup>

Because Church leadership was so depleted by emigration, members were called to important positions at very young ages. James Sherlock of Derby, England, was the Primary secretary at age nine and the stake Sunday School secretary at eleven. When, at age thirteen, his name was submitted to be the first counselor in the district Sunday School presidency, the district president said the counselor had to be more than a thirteen-year-old. So they made him the district Sunday School secretary instead.<sup>26</sup> Sisters were called as presidents of their Young Women organizations at age fifteen, and others were called to be Sunday School teachers for classes with students older than they were. Albert Roy stressed that the active members usually had two or three callings, which would take a lot

of time, leaving little free time to go home and “put their feet up.”<sup>27</sup> Andrew Dearden was grateful that his father had taught him how the priesthood worked and had demonstrated proper administration skills because from the age of thirteen he had many adult callings. Before he left on his mission, Andrew was the executive secretary in the ward, the early-morning seminary teacher, and the Young Men president.<sup>28</sup> When Warrick Kear was ten, he was called to be the branch pianist, though he barely knew how to play the piano. Memorizing two hymns at first, he played them every Sunday. The Saints in his branch heard “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah” and “O My Father” many times. Slowly, he added hymns to his repertoire, but he remembers it as an amazing time because he really was able to contribute to the Lord and His Church at such a young age.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Saints’ New Family in the Church of Jesus Christ**

Since emigration left the Church with scant resources and few members, it was no wonder that these dedicated Saints united together as a loving family to keep the Lord’s Church alive in the British Isles. In this era of persecution, hostility, and emigration, they had to turn to their little branches to find acceptance, love, and a sense of family; they had to turn to one another just to survive as disciples of Christ. Albert Sunderland reminisced regarding his early years as a member of the Church: “[The Saints] had to be united, because they had to help one another. . . . I wish for those days again.”<sup>30</sup>

Lucy Ripley shared these tender thoughts regarding how her branch became her family: “My whole interest all my life has been to the Church. . . . When we were made wards and stakes, we weren’t happy. We didn’t seem to have the same association. . . . We used to have such a lot of socials. . . . We used to have programmes on the stage, community singing, and playing games and refreshments.”<sup>31</sup>

Albert Sunderland echoed those sentiments:

In those days the Church was a lot different to what it is today, inasmuch as we were more involved, probably because we were smaller. Every day we seemed to be going to church for something. . . .

You’d go to [the members’] homes and you’d be treated like members of the family. And all the other members were there too. You’d just be a bound group of people in those days. . . .

The best thing that ever happened to us was the cottage meetings. Investigators and church members would unite to learn the gospel from the missionaries and mature members of the Church. We would have from 15 to 20 people attending in one of the members' homes. It was like a big family. We used to enjoy them very, very much.<sup>32</sup>

This unity and love attracted people to the Church. Lucy Ripley reminisced that when she was first baptized, the room where they met was horrible. But she kept going to church because “the people were so kind.”<sup>33</sup>

Sister Joan Thorpe spoke of her tiny branch in Northampton, England, and the impact that branch had in the life of each of its members. She remembered the effect of the branch members upon Sister Irene Preece's husband. Sister Preece was very active, but her husband was not a member. Then he suddenly agreed to listen to the missionaries and decided to be baptized. When Sister Preece asked her husband why he had this change of heart, he responded, “I've watched you all, and you've all been such a good example. I can't be left out of this.”<sup>34</sup>

Others also felt the unity of the small branch, and their lives were changed by it. Many spoke of having street meetings in which branch members would participate. They would sing a few hymns, and then the missionaries would teach the gospel. They would be heckled and ridiculed, but there was a sense of unity and a desire to serve the Lord. The members spoke of feeling the Spirit during these street meetings. Sister Joan Thorpe remembered when one special person, John H. Kitsell, stopped and listened. He felt the Spirit, noticed the joy of the branch members, and became curious. As he stood there he thought, “I want to know more about this.” Sister Thorpe continued: “He came to the meetings and joined the Church. . . . He's [now] a patriarch.”<sup>35</sup>

The members of the Church had no one else. Abandoned by their family and friends and left behind by emigrating Saints, the Saints stood unified, and together they weathered the storms of persecution and prepared the Church in the British Isles for greatness to come. However, the cost of their discipleship continued to be dear.

## The High Cost of Discipleship

Many of the narratives emphasize that the Lord required seemingly all they had so they could be members of the Church of Jesus Christ. They were willing to sacrifice their families and friends to become members in the Lord's family; they were willing to lose the respect of their countrymen to gain the respect of the Lord and their fellow Saints; they were willing to endure persecutions, including physical and emotional abuse, to receive immortality and eternal life and the Lord's gentle commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." They gave their all to lay the foundation so the Church could eventually thrive in Great Britain.

Albert Sunderland, for example, married his sweetheart, but nine months after they were married, he was called on a full-time mission for the Church. Without hesitation, he accepted the call and went forth to serve. Although he was serving in the stake right next to the stake where his bride lived, he obeyed all the rules of the mission, serving honorably and representing the Lord tremendously well. However, being away from his beautiful bride day after day, he realized the high cost of discipleship.<sup>36</sup>

The same Saints who emphasized the cost of discipleship testified that the reward was equally high. They stressed how the Lord blessed them collectively and individually. Lucy Bradbury told a story indicating her faith in and dedication to the gospel and the rewards that came from living faithfully:

When I was young, men in the Church were very scarce. . . . In my branch there wasn't a single fellow my age. . . . In the whole district there were only two, . . . and both of them married out of the Church. One of them brought his wife into the Church, the other didn't. And the other is the one that I married.

His wife died, you see, and he was a widower for three-and-a-half years, and then we got married. . . . That was June 1965. . . . When John and I got married, he said, "It's time we got sealed in the temple." I said, "You should first be sealed to your first wife, John." He said, "A man has a right to choose." . . . He insisted that I go with him to the temple. We were sealed, and then later I went and did the work for his first wife. We were quite happy together.<sup>37</sup>

Lucy Bradbury also had this to say about receiving blessings for living the gospel: “It’s always been a testimony to me that the Lord will help out if you do your duty. In fact, I think He’s the best paymaster in the world, and that was why I always felt that the Lord had a hand in giving me my work as a genealogist. That’s why I’ve always wanted to do my best, because I felt that the Lord gave it to me. . . . I’ve done the best I knew how because I felt I owed it to the Lord.”<sup>38</sup> The Saints told how the Lord repeatedly guided their lives, blessed them, protected them, and recompensed them magnificently for the sacrifices and services they rendered. And the collective testimony was that the Lord was with them.

James Sherlock told of how, when he was around twelve, he would go with many members of his branch to the marketplace in Derby after sacrament meeting to preach the gospel. He recalled that the Catholic Truth Society was in one area, Protestants were in another, the Jehovah’s Witnesses were in a third area, and the Saints completed the group, all singing, preaching, and bearing witness. He said there was a good exchange of ideas and at times heated arguments. He was hit with tomatoes, but he was also hit with the Spirit as he listened to testimonies of Christ’s restored Church. He paid the price of discipleship and reaped the rewards offered by the Master.

The Lord also touched the life of Derek Parry. He recounted the time when he first realized the Lord was integrally involved in his life:

I’d only been in the Church . . . two or three weeks. . . . I was asked to go with this Melchizedek Priesthood holder to the hospital to administer to this child who . . . had meningitis. So we went to the hospital, and the child was about . . . two years old. We learnt afterwards that the child had never even sat up, let alone walked at that age. . . . He had a very heavy fever, lying just flop in the cot, diagnosed with meningitis. So doctors didn’t give it a lot of hope. . . . I remember putting my hands on his head, even though I probably shouldn’t have done at that time. . . .

We went back to the hospital the next day, and this baby not only had lost the fever but was standing in the cot, bouncing up and down, for the first time in his life. I remember a conversation with the mother, saying it was a miracle. . . . That had quite an effect on me, because I thought, “You know, there really is something about this church and this priesthood.” I’ve had lots of experiences of that nature since, which has been very stimulating to my testimony over the years.<sup>39</sup>

Emlyn Davies bore witness of the Lord's help in his life as he related a life-changing story from his youth. Emlyn was the only member of the Church at his school. He felt isolated because no one wanted to be with a Mormon. He thought if he could win a prize for some competition at the school's activity camp, he would be accepted by the other boys. He entered into competition after competition, and before each event he would plead with God: "Heavenly Father, please help me to win a prize. I want so much to win a prize." But he never won, and he felt disappointed in himself and a little disappointed in the Lord, saying:

At the end of camp, I hadn't won one. . . . I felt I'd been left out, in a sense, because I believed that if you prayed for something that you'd have it, and it was kind of a disappointed feeling. But even when I was feeling this, the teacher who was in charge of our group called my name. . . . He . . . said, "Come on, Emlyn. Come to the front." . . . And I said, "I haven't won anything." He said, "Well, that's all right."

When I got to the front, one of the other teachers there said that they wanted to give a prize . . . to the bravest boy in the camp. . . . He went on to explain that as the teachers had gone round in the evenings making sure that the lights were out, there was only one boy in the camp who knelt in prayer. So they gave me a penknife, which I treasured. It was one of my best possessions. But my prayer was answered. . . . I had won a prize, and it came from an unexpected source. I thought I'd win it on the sports field, but I won it as a result of saying prayers, which had been my habit since joining the Church.<sup>40</sup>

The Lord taught Emlyn that he belonged, but not to a group of schoolboys. He belonged to the Lord. A relationship was forged that day between this little boy, who wanted to win a prize, and the Lord, who was offering the greatest prize—eternal life. Emlyn never forgot that relationship as he continued to serve God for the next fifty-five years as a branch president, district president, high counselor, and stake patriarch.

Lucy Bradbury summarized the feelings of the members of the Church who had paid the high price of discipleship yet had received great blessings: "I think our Church is wonderful. You get so many opportunities to take an active part. One of the reasons I think so much about our Church is because you feel that you are important to the Lord. You know, the Lord doesn't look upon us as a bunch

of people. He looks upon us as individuals, . . . [so] you feel closer to Him, and you know He's interested in you, and you know that He loves you in spite of your weaknesses. To me, that is one of the great blessings of our church, apart from the fact that this Church is so beautiful."<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

The sacrifice of the Saints in the British Isles during the early twentieth century enables the Saints today to enjoy the fullness of the gospel in their lives. The disciples of that early era felt isolated and alone; they were physically, socially, and emotionally abused because they were Latter-day Saints. Yet as they spoke of their experiences, their testimonies of Christ and His gospel rang clear, their unity was definite, their certainty that they had grown and progressed because of their sacrifices was evident, and their love for the Master and His Saints in the British Isles was obvious. These histories testify that the Saints felt privileged to be the Master's disciples and belong to the wonderful family of Church members in the British Isles. They expressed that their membership in Christ's Church and their affiliation with fellow Saints brought them exquisite joy and abundant life.

## Notes

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16. Craig Lithgow Marshall Oral History, interview by Richard L. Jensen, 1987, typescript, 27–31, BYU British LDS Oral History Project.
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21. Gordon William Sherlock Oral History, 13.
22. Joan Thorpe Oral History, 17–19.
23. Mavis Annie Oxley Oral History, 5.
24. Albert Sunderland Oral History, 8.
25. James Ronald Sherlock Oral History, 4–5.
26. James Ronald Sherlock Oral History, 9–10.
27. Albert Roy Oral History, 43.
28. Andrew Richard Dearden Oral History, interview by Ronald D. Dennis, 1987, typescript, 7, BYU British LDS Oral History Project.
29. Warrick Noel Kear Oral History, 5.
30. Albert Sunderland Oral History, 9.
31. Lucy Ripley Bradbury Oral History, 49.
32. Albert Sunderland Oral History, 3.
33. Lucy Ripley Bradbury Oral History, 4.
34. Joan Thorpe Oral History, 23.
35. Joan Thorpe Oral History, 29.
36. Albert Sunderland Oral History, 6–8.
37. Lucy Ripley Bradbury Oral History, 32–33.
38. Lucy Ripley Bradbury Oral History, 41.

39. Derek Lewis Parry Oral History, 6.
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41. Lucy Ripley Bradbury Oral History, 32.

