

The Church in Twentieth-Century Great Britain: A Historical Overview

Alexander L. Baugh

In 1837, Latter-day Saint missionaries from America set foot in Great Britain to seek converts. In the years that followed, the Church experienced phenomenal growth, reaching 32,894 members by 1851.¹ However, because of the Church's teachings that emphasized gathering to the main center of the Church—first to Nauvoo, Illinois, and later to Salt Lake City—many English converts emigrated, principally from the port of Liverpool. In fact, by the early 1850s, English conversions had actually reached closer to 50,000, because by that time some 17,000 British Latter-day Saints had moved to America.²

The success of proselyting efforts was the greatest from 1837 through the 1850s. However, British converts who joined the Church during the remainder of the nineteenth century were still encouraged to immigrate to Utah. Between 1840 and 1913, an estimated 52,000 English Saints left the isles of the Atlantic. This may indicate why in 1892, Church membership in Great Britain was only 2,604.³ Beginning in the twentieth century, emphasis on emigration declined; and following the first World War, emigration restrictions made it more difficult for British Saints to come to America. Had nineteenth-century British Latter-day Saint converts remained in their homeland, through continued proselyting efforts and natural increase, membership totals there might have reached the one-million mark. Nonetheless, in spite of the drain in membership due to immigration, during the twentieth century the Church in Great Britain continued to be a viable and increasingly visible Christian denomination. Furthermore, in the last fifty years, the Church has once again experienced renewed growth, surpassing the membership totals of many Protestant groups.

Until recently, the majority of historians and writers have focused attention principally on the nineteenth-century Saints who emigrated from Great Britain and the contributions they made in the heart of the Intermountain West. This chapter summarizes some of the activities, experiences, and problems encountered by Church members who stayed in Great Britain during the twentieth century. Sources for this chapter include the works and contributions of historians, biographers, and social scientists who have made a significant contribution to the historical, sociological, and demographic understanding of the Church in this era.

Opposition during the First Three Decades

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, British Saints and their religion came under considerable opposition. It is possible that the Mormon faith was the target of more religious persecution and intolerance than any other denomination in the country during this time. This seems strange when considering that the Church was then a minor religion with membership never exceeding 7,200.⁴ British anti-Mormon attacks focused on two major themes: (1) the Church's former practice of plural marriage (polygamy) and (2) the controversy surrounding the 1902 election and subsequent Senate hearings of Reed Smoot, an Apostle who had been elected by the Utah state legislature to the U.S. Senate but who was charged with practicing polygamy. Opposition came from the press, political circles, the clergy, and anti-Mormon rallies and plays. Some Latter-day Saints, especially American missionaries, experienced physical abuse and mob violence.

Polygamy, whether it was true or not, made a good story. Many British citizens outside the faith held to the idea that the missionaries were intent on converting innocent girls for the purpose of luring and transporting them back to Utah where they would be forced into the plural marriage system. The rumors of missionaries whisking away innocent young women was fueled by portrayals of abductions in motion pictures. The first such film appeared in 1911. Titled *Mormonens Offer* (A Victim of the Mormons) and produced by Nordisk Films of Copenhagen, Denmark, a front-runner in early

European film production, the film was shown in theater houses throughout Europe, including Great Britain. “The film traces the fictitious travails of a young woman (Florence) lured to Utah by an unscrupulous Mormon missionary (Larson),” write historians Brian Q. Cannon and Jacob W. Olmstead. “Florence comes to her senses too late, when the pair are already aboard a ship to America. The story turns into a cat-and-mouse chase between the Mormon elder and Florence’s brother (George) and suitor (Leslie). In the end Larson dies an accidental shooting, and Florence is free.”⁵ Although such rumors were ill founded, the Mormon leadership sought to dispel any such ideas by replying that polygamous marriages were no longer being performed, women under the age of eighteen were not baptized without parental consent, nor were married women without permission from their husbands.

Perhaps no one person was more responsible for perpetrating Mormon polygamy myths than the author Matilda Graham Cory, alias Winifred Graham. During her lifetime she wrote some eighty-eight works, six of which were anti-Mormon “thriller” novels (a seventh, *Judas of Salt Lake* [1916], was relatively unknown). Between 1907 and 1924, she published books such as *Ezra the Mormon* (1911), *The Sin of Utah* (1912), *The Mormons: A Popular History* (1913), *Sealed Women* (1922), and *Eve and the Elders* (1924). During World War I she also charged that the Mormons were behind the German war effort.⁶ In 1922 a second major motion picture, *Trapped by the Mormons*, adapted from one of Graham’s novels, played in major theaters throughout Great Britain.⁷ Numerous major newspapers of the day, both independently operated and Church-affiliated, featured anti-Mormon articles and editorials. Anglican and Catholic clergymen were also quick to take up the attack. Convert baptisms took a marked decline because of the negative Mormon image.

During the first decades of the century, Latter-day Saints were subject to physical abuse and violence, and their places of worship were vandalized. In Nuneaton, sixty-year-old Albert Smith was accosted by a local agitator and tarred and feathered while leaving the building following a worship service. In Edinburgh, some one hundred university students broke up a Mormon meeting by pouring green paint and honey on three elderly Saints and then tearing up the

hymnbooks before leaving. In April 1911, a meeting in Birkenhead was broken up, and several members were injured when a mob attacked a meetinghouse by smashing the windows. Between 1911 and 1913, there were at least ten incidents in which Mormon elders were stoned and beaten. In some cities, the elders were threatened with expulsion and usually left before experiencing the consequences. In several meeting places, windows were broken and signs torn down.⁸ From July 1921 to December 1923, future Church President Ezra Taft Benson served as a missionary in Great Britain. He recorded that the missionaries experienced so much taunting and abuse that at times they turned to the police for protection.⁹ However, in spite of the persecution, the Saints generally remained true to their Church and their faith.

Because of the prevalent anti-Mormon feelings within the country during this period, the government investigated the rumors concerning the motives of the missionaries from America. In 1910, Winston Churchill, who was then serving as secretary to the Home Office, responded to some of the British propaganda and stated, "Inquiry has from time to time been made into allegations which have reached the Home Office, but no ground for action has been found. I am informed that polygamy is now forbidden by the rules of the Mormon Church as well as the law of the United States." In yet another reply concerning the allegations against the Mormons, Churchill responded, "I am aware that the matter is causing a great deal of concern in this country. I am treating it in a serious spirit, and looking into it very thoroughly."

Although Churchill's Home Office investigation found no evidence that the Mormons were preaching or practicing polygamy, in 1911 Arnold Ward, a conservative member of Parliament, almost succeeded in bringing the Mormon problem before the House of Commons in hopes of taking action against the Church. Although Ward was unsuccessful in his attempt to initiate some sort of anti-Mormon legislation, in 1919, when the Church tried to send missionaries back into the country (after having evacuated them at the beginning of the war), the Home Office determined that Mormon missionaries should "not [be] given equal treatment with other visa applicants." In January 1920 the Home Office determined that mis-

sionaries “should be denied visas.” Through the political pressurings of Utah’s two senators, William H. King and Reed Smoot, and acting secretary of state Frank L. Polk, in May 1920 the British government permitted Mormon missionaries to return to the country.¹⁰

The 1930s: A More Favorable Image

Although Church opposition and agitation continued after World War I, during the 1930s British citizens were more tolerant and understanding.¹¹ After World War II, British feelings changed even further, from tolerance, to acceptance, to praise and admiration for the Church and its members. Participation in athletic competitions in the 1930s helped to foster a more favorable image of the Saints. In 1935 the National Baseball Association was created in Great Britain, the country’s first organized baseball league. That year, the London missionary team captured the national championship. The following year, the association split into a northern and southern division. In 1936 and 1937 the Mormon team known as the Rochedale Greys, made up of missionaries and Saints, won the northern division, while in the southern division the Catford Saints captured second place in 1936 and reached the quarter finals in 1937. The Mormons proved equally talented in basketball. Like the baseball league, the National Basketball Association was also created in 1935. The London missionary basketball team captured the London league championship in 1936 and in April 1938 met none other than the Rochedale Saints in the national championship held in Wembley Stadium.¹²

In the late 1930s, the British Mission sponsored a sixteen-voice missionary singing group, the Millennial Chorus, which sang to the applause of many audiences. The elders chosen to sing in this chorus proselyted during the day and then rehearsed and performed in the evenings. Besides singing in Mormon congregations for several months, the group performed in schools, churches, cinemas, and even on the radio.¹³

A significant change concerning the Church’s British headquarters occurred during the 1930s. Since 1841, Liverpool had been a major Church stronghold and served as the headquarters for the entire European Mission. From this locale, the mission had also

directed the publication of the *Millennial Star*, which had been in operation since 1840. By the late 1920s, the mission directed the proselyting activities of not only the mission in Great Britain but also ten additional missions on the Continent. However, in 1928 the Church's leadership made the decision to organize the British Mission, which would operate independent from the European Mission, with a separate mission president. James H. Douglas, the second British Mission president, moved the mission headquarters to London in 1932. In 1933, John A. Widtsoe, president of the European Mission, followed suit by choosing to relocate the European Mission headquarters to London. The next year, Douglas moved the *Millennial Star* and the British Mission offices to the same London building where the European Mission offices operated, 5 Gordon Square, London.¹⁴

The year 1937 marked the hundredth year of the Church in Great Britain. The event was commemorated by the visit of President Heber J. Grant. President Grant's visit marked only the second time that a Church President had visited the country, the first being Joseph F. Smith in 1906. President Grant's visit also served as a homecoming for the eighty-year-old prophet-leader who served from 1904 to 1906 as European Mission president. During his eighteen-day stay (July 19 to August 6), President Grant interviewed the missionaries, met personally with the Saints and their leaders, presided at numerous conferences, dedicated several chapels built by the Saints, and "unveiled a beautiful plaque erected on the banks of the River Ribble" near Preston, England, where the first convert baptisms had been performed in 1837.¹⁵

During the year of the British centennial, Richard L. Evans—managing editor of the Church's official press organ, the *Improvement Era*; former secretary of the European Mission; and former associate editor of the *Millennial Star*—was commissioned to write a history of the first hundred years of the Church in Great Britain. His book titled *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain* was the first historical treatise of the events associated with the growth and development of the Church in that country.¹⁶

Statistics indicate that Church membership in Great Britain in 1937 stood at only 6,364.¹⁷ Thus, the Church had found difficulty

increasing its membership significantly since the turn of the century. However, a much more impressive statistic is that at the close of the first century of the Church in Great Britain, approximately 126,593 individuals had been baptized, and 5,947 missionaries had labored in that country.¹⁸

The Church during the Two World Wars

Germany's declaration of war on Russia on August 1, 1914, prompted Church leaders in Salt Lake City to take steps to evacuate the American emissaries and missionaries from Europe. The majority of the American missionaries were recalled from Great Britain as well. Before the beginning of the war, Great Britain had 250 proselyting missionaries, more than any other European mission. Church President Joseph F. Smith also encouraged young men in both the United States and Great Britain to support the war effort.¹⁹ Such a situation caused many English branches to be void of any ecclesiastical leadership from the American elders. British young men also could not proselytize because of their induction into military service. It was during this period that the women in the British Mission made a concerted effort to carry the Church forward. Historian Louis B. Cardon wrote, "Besides working in Relief Society, contributing to the national war effort, caring for their own families, and performing individual part-time volunteer work, . . . women also assisted in the proselytizing work of the mission."²⁰

World War II created a much more difficult situation for the Church. The withdrawal of American missionaries and mission presidents from both Europe and Great Britain was sudden and complete. Realizing war was imminent, Church officials chose to withdraw the missionaries from the Continent even before Neville Chamberlain declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, and all continental missionaries were directed to leave via the Church's London headquarters. Canadian-born British Mission president Hugh B. Brown remained for the next four months to make sure the evacuation operations were complete. Because the British and European mission headquarters in Gordon Square in South London were located only a half mile from three major railroad stations—obvious

targets for German air raids—President Brown decided to move the mission offices to the Ravenslea Chapel, and a bomb shelter was constructed adjacent to the building. Both precautions proved to be justified because the Gordon Square mission home was bombed and the Ravenslea building received some damage late in the war, although it received no direct hits and there were no injuries. Before leaving for the States, President Brown also set apart Andre K. Anastasiou, a native-born Russian who had immigrated to England, as the acting mission president so that the British congregations had ecclesiastical leadership. For the next four years, Anastasiou presided over the British Saints in this capacity. President Brown's departure in January 1940 meant that for the first time in over one hundred years, Great Britain was totally without missionaries from the United States.²¹

For a period of four years and five months (1940–44), Anastasiou directed the mission. Desirous to keep proselytizing efforts going, he called local members—men with health or disability deferments, women, and some young men who were not old enough for military service—to serve six-month full-time missions. Although the number of missionaries serving under this program peaked at just over forty, 105 local members were engaged in full-time missionary service during the war years. President Anastasiou also initiated a “home missionary” program. Church members who were called to this program agreed to contribute from four to eighteen hours of Church service each week, visiting members, particularly less-active ones, proselytizing door to door, and doing the duties the full-time elders had performed. Over five hundred British Saints labored as home missionaries during the war years.²²

Although Germany did not surrender to the Allies until May 1945, President Hugh B. Brown was assigned to return to England in March of 1944, where for the next two years he continued in his former position as the British Mission president. During this time he also labored as the Church servicemen's coordinator in the European Theater. When peace in Europe was once again established, Church leaders in Salt Lake City were concerned about the spiritual and temporal welfare of the European congregations. They were particularly concerned about the Saints on the Continent because

Church units in Great Britain had such limited contact with Church headquarters. Many Latter-day Saints in the occupied territories, however, had not only been unable to have Church contact for several years but also experienced physical devastation and depravation caused by the war.

In January 1946, only nine months after the war had ended, the newly called Mormon Apostle Ezra Taft Benson was assigned by the Church's First Presidency to serve as president of the European Mission. (In May 1946, Selvoy J. Boyer replaced Hugh B. Brown as the British Mission president.) Benson's assignment was actually twofold: (1) restore contact with European Church leaders and members in the branches, and (2) provide welfare shipments and assistance to the Saints in war-torn regions. Using the London mission office as his base for ten months, President Benson, in often severe postwar conditions, toured the thirteen European nations where Latter-day Saints resided, including Great Britain, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Finland, and Poland.²³

The 1950s: A New Era, a New Image, and a New Temple

The postwar era of the 1950s ushered in a new period of growth and changes in Church operation. Several factors brought this about. First, in the 1950s the Church gave approval for the purchase and construction of numerous chapels. One historian recorded how the Church's building program proceeded:

Initially, the Saints purchased large homes and converted them into chapels where missionaries or older couples lived. The larger rooms were utilized for Church services and other activities. As the Church members met in these converted homes, construction was begun on the rear portion of the property for a new chapel. When the chapel was completed, the homes in the front were removed to make way for parking lots or landscaping. This two-phase approach to chapel building was followed in many lands in Europe, providing adequate and attractive physical facilities for the first time.²⁴

These beautiful and modern buildings also helped the missionary effort since people who investigated the Church tended to be more

impressed with these structures than the rented buildings and homes where the many congregations had been meeting.

In February 1955, the First Presidency authorized the mission president, A. Hamer Reiser, to formally organize the male members of the Church holding the Melchizedek Priesthood into quorums. At that time only 6 percent of the Church's membership in Great Britain held the higher priesthood, most of whom were elders, totaling 541. Because of this relatively small number, five quorums covering the entire country were established. Since the early days of the Church in Great Britain, no self-governing priesthood units had been formally organized. With organized priesthood quorums, the American elders exercised less ministerial jurisdiction over the congregations, which meant that local Saints were able to assume more of the responsibilities in directing the affairs of their own Church units.²⁵

The Church also received positive national attention with the European tour of the famed Mormon Tabernacle Choir in 1955. The choir, accompanied by Church President David O. McKay, presented four concerts in Great Britain. The response from the British people, press, and media was overwhelmingly positive.²⁶ The choir's tour coincided with the groundbreaking ceremonies for the London Temple on August 27, 1955. Although it was announced on August 1, 1953, that a temple would be built in England, the groundbreaking ceremonies on August 27, 1955, marked the beginning of the initial construction phase of the building. By mid-August 1958 the temple was completed, and for a period of over two weeks (August 16–September 3) over 76,000 visitors toured the structure before it was officially dedicated on September 7–9. Construction of the sacred edifice not only indicated the faithfulness of the 12,000 members in Great Britain but also symbolized a new beginning of expected growth.²⁷

The 1960s: An Era of Unprecedented Growth

In 1960 Church membership in Great Britain stood at 17,332. Only two years later it had nearly tripled, reaching 45,206.²⁸ A large number of these conversions were young males baptized as a result

of the baseball leagues organized by the missionaries. Many of these converts of the late 1950s and early 1960s became known as “baseball baptisms.” During this period, Elder Derek A. Cuthbert, who was then serving as a counselor in the mission presidency and later served as a member of the First Quorum of Seventy recalled that, “instead of baptizing ones and twos, almost overnight from mid-1960, the missionaries were bringing in tens and hundreds. Baseball became described as a ‘proselyting tool,’ and teams and leagues were organized all over the British Isles.” Cuthbert continues:

After the game, the missionaries would tell them about the Church and start to teach the principles. They then visited the parents in their homes and found in most cases that the parents were delighted that their children were having good, wholesome activity. There was usually no objection by the parents to teaching their children the gospel and eventually baptizing them. Two important principles were laid down by the mission presidents. These were that every effort should be made to teach the parents, and baptize families, and if this were not possible then parents must agree in writing to the baptizing of their children.²⁹

Under these circumstances, the baptism practices and motives of the missionaries were questioned. Some questioned the wisdom of bringing young people into the Church when they had less capacity to understand Church tenets, doctrines, and principles. In fact, a considerable number of those baptized in that era are not active in their adult years and are members on paper only. However, because of the consistency in the growth pattern of the Church during this period, it is reasonable to conclude that a significant number of those who were “baseball baptisms” have remained faithful and have contributed to the growth and strength of the Church in that country.³⁰

Prior to 1960, branches came under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the British Mission with the mission president officiating as the presiding officer. However, on March 27, 1960, Elder Harold B. Lee, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, organized the first stake in Manchester, England, with the members making up the entire leadership of a stake unit. By the end of the 1960s, Great Britain had seven stakes, including one in Glasgow, Scotland.³¹ A similar pattern occurred in the creation of new missions. In a four-year

span (1960–64), eight missions in Great Britain and Ireland were created: North British (1960), Scottish–Irish (1961), Central British (1961), Southwest British (1962), Irish (1962), Northeast British (1962), North Scottish (1962), and British South (1964).³²

To accommodate the ever-increasing number of Latter-day Saints, another building program was initiated in the 1960s. By 1967 an additional seventy-three buildings had been completed. To accomplish this, “building missionaries” were called, and members contributed thousands of hours of labor. In 1961 the most notable chapel was dedicated. Built in Hyde Park at great expense to the Church, “this chapel symbolized the permanence and maturity of the Church in Europe. The contrast between the new chapel, located between prominent universities, museums and fashionable housing, with its imposing organ and extensive facilities . . . symbolized in many ways the progress the Church had made during the same period [only] in more important spiritual ways.”³³

In the late 1960s, religious education opportunities became available for the youth and young adults in the Church. John M. Madsen was sent by the Church Educational System from Salt Lake City to operate the seminary program for the youth and the institute program for college-age adults. In 1968 the Latter-day Saints Student Organization (LDSSA) was also officially organized to incorporate social activities along with the educational and spiritual activities of university students. Education days were also begun in the stakes to provide religious education opportunities for adult members. Since 1962, with the establishment of Deseret Enterprises Ltd., a bookstore and general Church Distribution Center, members have also had greater access to official books and materials.³⁴

By the end of the 1960s, the Church began receiving increased positive media attention. Typical of such media activity was the first appearance of a full-time Latter-day Saint missionary on national television. Thames Television, in London, invited the Church to provide a missionary who could represent the Church on a prime-time public affairs program. Elder Dennis A. Wright from Gooding, Idaho, accepted the assignment. In an hour-long interview, Elder Wright responded to questions directed by the program host. The discussion proved constructive until questions regarding plural

marriage and the Mountain Meadows Massacre were posed. Elder Wright was prepared and responded admirably, and the host commended the Church for its openness and honesty and invited viewers to accept the Mormon missionaries as honest, sincere ministers of the gospel. This was a first for British television and opened the way for improved media coverage.³⁵

The 1970s: “Osmondmania” and Area General Conferences

In the 1970s, the rock-and-roll success of the Osmonds—Alan, Wayne, Merrill, Jay, and Donny (and later Marie and Jimmy)—beginning with their 1971 hit single, “One Bad Apple,” carried over from the United States to Great Britain, where they experienced immediate popularity, especially among teens. “Osmondmania” quickly swept through both countries. In May 1972, “the Mormon brothers from Utah” performed for the first time in London and visited Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace. In July, Donny’s solo number, “Puppy Love,” topped the U.K. charts for five weeks. The Osmonds returned in October for a three-week engagement, taping television shows and performing concerts in London, Manchester, and Birmingham. During this tour they debuted the number “Crazy Horses,” which rose to number two on the U.K. pop charts. In December, nine-year-old Jimmy, the youngest Osmond, released a solo number, “Long-Haired Lover from Liverpool,” which rose to number one on the U.K. charts, eclipsing “Crazy Horses.” In 1974 the Osmonds garnered two other top five U.K. hits: “I’m Leaving It Up to You” (Donny and Marie) and “Love Me for a Reason” (Donny). The Osmonds indirectly served as Church ambassadors, and their popularity in Great Britain helped shape a more favorable public image of the Church and its members and opened doors for missionary opportunities and conversions.³⁶

In 1970 the Church also received considerable media attention when it announced the first area general conferences would be held in Great Britain. The first conference was held in late August 1971 in Manchester’s King’s Hall. Ninety-five-year-old Church President Joseph Fielding Smith presided and spoke at the conference. Other General Authorities and general Church auxiliary leaders attending

and participating included Harold B. Lee (First Counselor in the First Presidency), Spencer W. Kimball, Richard L. Evans, Howard W. Hunter, Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, Boyd K. Packer (Quorum of the Twelve), Henry D. Taylor, Marion D. Hanks (Assistants to the Twelve), Paul H. Dunn, Loren C. Dunn (First Council of the Seventy), Victor L. Brown (counselor in the Presiding Bishopric), Belle F. Spafford (general Relief Society president), and Florence S. Jacobsen (YWMIA general president).³⁷ Five years later, President Spencer W. Kimball attended and presided over three more area conferences in London, Manchester, and Glasgow over a period of four days (June 19–22, 1976).³⁸

The '80s and '90s: Moving toward the Twenty-First Century

Several major developments occurred in the 1980s and '90s, demonstrating that the Church had achieved a degree of ecclesiastical stability and autonomy. In 1980 the Church purchased a 305-acre farm near Kington, Worchestershire, England, which “included a dairy herd, beef cattle, and a flock of sheep.” In July of that year, the first bishops’ storehouse opened in Birmingham. In following years, “mobile bishops’ storehouses” made it possible to serve the welfare needs of Church members living in other cities.³⁹ By 1982 the entire United Kingdom was completely covered by stakes, signifying that the ecclesiastical stakes, wards, and branches had come under the umbrella of local priesthood leadership.⁴⁰ In 1983, Great Britain provided over 400 full-time missionaries. To accommodate those entering into full-time missionary service, in 1985 the Church opened a regional Missionary Training Center in facilities adjacent to the London Temple.⁴¹ That same year, Church membership in Great Britain numbered 132,810, a figure nearly eight times greater than twenty-five years earlier.⁴²

In July 1987 a three-day celebration was held throughout the United Kingdom commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Church in Great Britain. President Ezra Taft Benson, President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, four Apostles, and seven members of the First Quorum of the Seventy participated in the festivities. In addition to a special dinner held in

London, attended by former British prime minister Edward Heath, nine historical markers were dedicated.⁴³ Two historical books narrating and documenting the 150-year history of the Church in the British Isles were published in 1987, both by Cambridge University Press, namely, *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987*, edited by BYU professors V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter; and *The Second Century: Latter-day Saints in Great Britain, 1937–1987*, by Derek A. Cuthbert, a British convert and member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. In addition, the spring 1987 issue of *BYU Studies* was devoted to historical articles dealing with the Church in Great Britain.

The Church in the British Isles achieved another landmark on October 19, 1992. During the rededictory services of the London Temple, President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, made the announcement that a second temple would be built in Great Britain near Preston, Lancashire, England. Having served a mission in Preston nearly sixty years earlier, President Hinckley took a special interest in the building from start to finish. He personally selected the fifteen-acre site (the site selected was actually in Chorley, situated a few miles south of Preston), conducted the groundbreaking ceremonies (June 12, 1994), and four years later, as President of the Church, “presided over and addressed 13 of the 15” dedicatory sessions (June 7–10, 1998). The Preston England Temple was the fifty-second operating temple built by the Church, serving the membership of the Church living in Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, and northern England. Adjacent to the temple is a regional missionary training center, distribution center, stake center, family history center, and housing for temple patrons and temple missionaries.⁴⁴

Two active Latter-day Saints were elected to national political offices in the 1990s—one in Great Britain and the other in Scotland. In 1990, Terry Rooney, a Church member in the Huddersfield England Stake and a member of the country’s Labour Party, was elected in a special election to the British House of Commons. His election marked the first time a Latter-day Saint served in the British Parliament, and he is the only Latter-day Saint currently serving. He

has been reelected in four general elections. In 1999, Brian Adam, from Aberdeen, Scotland, a biochemist by trade and a member of the Scottish National Party, was elected a member of the Scottish Parliament for northeast Scotland and reelected in 2003 for the Aberdeen North district.⁴⁵

Fourteen men born in Great Britain and Ireland have served as General Authorities of the Church.⁴⁶ Of these, all but two (William Law and John Taylor), lived into the twentieth century and therefore served as General Authorities during that century. However, only two—Derek A. Cuthbert and Kenneth Johnson—were living in Great Britain at the time of their call as General Authorities. Elder Cuthbert, from Nottingham, England, was sustained as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy in April 1978, serving until his death in 1991.⁴⁷ Elder Johnson, from Norwich, England, was called to the Second Quorum of the Seventy in April 1990. Three years later, in April 1993, he was sustained as a member of the First Quorum.⁴⁸ At the turn of the century, Elder Johnson was the only native of the British Isles serving as a General Authority.

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the Church has experienced steady, sustained growth in Great Britain. In 2001 the United Kingdom had forty-four stakes, seven missions, and a total Church membership of 172,961.⁴⁹

Sociological Studies

A number of sociological studies have been conducted about members in Great Britain during the last decades of the twentieth century. Interestingly, sociologist John D. Gay has discovered that the greatest concentration of the Mormon populace has tended to remain in those cities and regions where the missionary effort of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been centered, namely northern England, and more specifically the port cities. Gay notes that the distribution of Mormon members over the country forms a distinctive pattern. The four ports that have had close links with America (Bristol, Southampton, Liverpool, and Plymouth), each have a large Mormon following among its population. Another port, Hull, also has a surprisingly large Mormon congrega-

tion. Numerical strength resides in the northern half of England. Taking two of the traditional dividing lines, we find that about sixty percent of the Church membership is to the north of the Severn-Wash line, and forty-five percent are to the north of a line between the Humber and the Dee. More specifically, a large proportion of the northern total is found in the three areas of Manchester, Leeds, and Sunderland.⁵⁰

Robert Buckle, a British sociologist, conducted an insightful study concerning the attitudes of the Saints by comparing their responses with their Anglican, Roman Catholic, and nonconformist neighbors in the region of Herefordshire. Some of his findings are summarized as follows: (1) The Latter-day Saints had the highest percentage of youthful members, with over half under the age of twenty-five. (2) The social class backgrounds of the membership of each of the four groups was similar and was principally made up of the lower-middle, working class and middle classes. The Saints were the only group that did not have members who could be classified as being in the upper or upper-middle class. (3) Thirty-seven percent of the Mormon converts prior to their baptism were not affiliated with any religion, with thirty percent being affiliated with the Church of England. (4) Forty percent of the converts to the Church joined principally through the influence of the missionaries. Thirty-seven percent joined the Church because of the way of life it offered, which promised a purpose to living. Only eleven percent joined because of their belief in the Book of Mormon. (5) Latter-day Saints and members of the Church of England responded the most frequently as being “very happy.” (6) Latter-day Saints responded the most frequently as never being lonely. (7) No Latter-day Saint favored any type of multiple marriage system being instituted, even if lawful. This attitude reflects the fact that Latter-day Saints in Great Britain no longer identify with the period when plural marriage was practiced. (8) The responses of all four religious groups indicated a tolerance and acceptance of people of all religions as well as those from nonreligious backgrounds. (9) Twenty-nine percent of both the Latter-day Saints and the Roman Catholics believed sexual relations was only for the purpose of begetting children (the highest percentage of the four groups surveyed). However, sixty-eight

percent of the Latter-day Saints believed sexual relations was also meant to be enjoyed and not merely for procreation.

Buckle's survey findings lead to the following conclusions about the general characteristics of the Latter-day Saints in Herefordshire, namely that (1) they are young; (2) they come from middle-class backgrounds; (3) over a third were not affiliated with any religion prior to their conversion, while almost a third were previously Anglican; (4) they are relatively happy; (5) they are tolerant of others; and (6) they possess a relatively healthy attitude toward sex. In short, Latter-day Saints are essentially part of the religious mainstream of Christian society in Great Britain.⁵¹

In a study published in 1987 by Latter-day Saint sociologists Tim B. Heaton, Stan L. Albrecht, and J. Randall Johnson, they conclude that Church growth patterns in Great Britain during the latter part of the twentieth century were less pronounced. This is due in part to the lack of religiosity and growing secularism in British society and the creation of what the authors call the "British Welfare State," which has greatly "reduced the number of people who may be interested in joining a new religious group."⁵² The researchers discovered that the Church population in Great Britain is "disproportionately young, female, and white." They also note that marital status for the national and Church populations were similar but discovered that there was a higher percentage of divorced persons and more one-person households in the Church population. Not surprisingly, family size was larger in the Church population.⁵³ Statistical data from the study shows that in the 1980s, Church membership in Great Britain was growing at an annual rate of 2.5 percent (compared to 4.9 percent Church-wide), half that of the Church as a whole. However, this figure still represented a doubling of the Church population every twenty-eight years.⁵⁴ In summary, the researchers note that "LDS members [in Great Britain] are representative of the national population in many respects."⁵⁵

Summary

In summary, during the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Church in Great Britain experienced opposition from

several sectors of the society but perhaps most noticeably from the press. Hostility toward Church members and missionaries was also a frequent occurrence. During the 1930s, a feeling of tolerance emerged as the image of the Church became more favorable, due in part to national exposure of the Church through athletic competition and singing groups. The two world wars caused a decline in missionary work mainly because of the evacuation of the American missionaries which created the need for British Saints to take upon themselves the leadership of the Church and the responsibility to carry on proselyting labors. In the postwar years of the 1950s, the Church became more visible, with the construction of modern chapels and the erection of the London Temple. The growth of the Church, especially during the 1960s, brought about the creation, organization, and reorganization of multiple stakes and missions. The decade was also marked by continued building construction in order to accommodate the increasing number of converts and by the implementation of Church auxiliaries and their programs. The 1970s brought increased public exposure to the Church, primarily through the singing and recording success of the Osmond family. The growth in the 1980s and '90s demonstrated that the Church has achieved a high degree of ecclesiastical stability and regional autonomy. In recent years, sociogeographic studies indicate Church populations have traditionally been larger in the northern regions of the country, due in part to the connection of northern ports to the United States. Sociological studies also suggest Mormons have essentially become part of the mainstream Christian society in Great Britain.

Based on the history of the Church in Great Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Church of Jesus Christ will continue to be a visible and vibrant Christian denomination in the United Kingdom during the twenty-first century. Furthermore, as membership increases as expected, the Church and its members may even play a more significant role in the religious, social, and perhaps even the political landscape of the country in the future.

Notes

1. Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles Since 1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 97.

2. John D. Gay, *Geography of Religion in England* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1971), 192.

3. Currie, Gilbert, and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, 97.

4. Currie, Gilbert, and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, 157–58.

5. Brian Q. Cannon and Jacob W. Olmstead, “‘Scandalous Film’: The Campaign to Suppress Anti-Mormon Motion Pictures, 1911–12,” *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 45; see also Jacob W. Olmstead, “A Victim of the Mormons and the Danites: Images and Relics from Early Twentieth-Century Anti-Mormon Silent Films,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 203–7.

6. See Malcolm R. Thorp, “Winnifred Graham and the Mormon Image in England,” *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979): 110–11.

7. See James V. D’Arc, “The Way We Were,” *This People*, August–September 1985, 44; and D’Arc, “Mormons, Image of: Film,” in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:947.

8. See Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 230–31; Malcolm R. Thorp, “‘Mormon Peril’: The Crusade against the Saints in Britain, 1910–1914,” *Journal of Mormon History* 2 (1975): 69–88; and Nicholai Sorenson, “The Winds of Adversity: Anti-Mormonism in Great Britain, 1910–1925,” unpublished paper, April 17, 1974, typescript, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

9. See Sheri L. Dew, “A Mission to England,” in *Ezra Taft Benson: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 58, 62.

10. Malcolm R. Thorp, “The British Government and the Mormon Question, 1910–1922,” *Journal of Church and State* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 313, 316–20.

11. President Gordon B. Hinckley served as missionary in Great Britain during the years 1933–35. In examining his mission years, biographer Sheri Dew includes a number of Elder Hinckley’s mission experiences, none of which indicates open hostility against the Church or its members (see Sheri L. Dew, “A Mission and Beyond,” in *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996], 58–85).

12. Louis B. Cardon, “The First World War and the Great Depression, 1914–39,” in V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter, eds., *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 357–59; see also Cliff Bagley, *Mormon Missionaries Who Played Sports in England* (n.p., n.d.). Bagley’s book is a short memoir of his experiences as a missionary in Great Britain and his participation as a member of the Church-sponsored teams during the years

1937–39. Nearly half of the fifty-eight-page book is composed of newspaper clippings about the Mormon baseball, basketball, and rugby teams.

13. Cardon, “The First World War and the Great Depression,” in *Truth Will Prevail*, 359.

14. Cardon, “The First World War and the Great Depression,” in *Truth Will Prevail*, 350–51.

15. James R. Moss, “Thirty Years of Mormonism in Great Britain, 1937–1967,” typescript, unpublished paper, 1967, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 2–4; and Cardon, “The First World War and the Great Depression, 1914–1939,” in *Truth Will Prevail*, 354–56.

16. Evans’s title is somewhat misleading. Although it suggests that the book is a history of the Church in Great Britain from 1837 to 1937, the author’s main focus is from 1837 to the mid-1840s. There is little historical text covering the twentieth century, merely some mention of leaders who served during the period and a few tables listing missionaries and convert baptisms.

17. Currie, *Churches and Churchgoers*, 158.

18. Cardon, “The First World War and the Great Depression, 1914–39,” in *Truth Will Prevail*, 355.

19. Cardon, “The First World War and the Great Depression,” in *Truth Will Prevail*, 336.

20. Cardon, “The First World War and the Great Depression, 1914–39,” in *Truth Will Prevail*, 339; for more about World War I, Britain, and the Church, see also Joseph F. Boone, “The Role of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Relation to the United States Military, 1900–1975” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1975), 141–46.

21. See David F. Boone, “The Worldwide Evacuation of Latter-day Saint Missionaries at the Beginning of World War II” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981), 99–118; and Eugene E. Campbell and Richard D. Poll, “President of the British Mission” in *Hugh B. Brown: His Life and Thought* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), 120–40.

22. See Poll, “British Mission Again,” in *Hugh B. Brown*, 64–87.

23. Dew, “Mission of Mercy,” in *Ezra Taft Benson*, 197–227. Frederick W. Babel, who served as Elder Benson’s secretary on this assignment, later wrote about the experience in a book titled *On Wings of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft), 1972.

24. James R. Moss, “Building the Kingdom in Europe,” in *The International Church*, ed. James R. Moss, R. Lanier Britsch, James R. Christianson, and Richard O. Cowan (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1982), 91.

25. Derek A. Cuthbert, *The Second Century: Latter-day Saints in Great Britain, 1937–1987* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1987), 1:14–17; see also Derek A. Cuthbert, “Church Growth in the British Isles, 1937–1987,” *BYU Studies* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 13–15; and Moss, “Building the Kingdom in Europe,” in *The International Church*, 88–89.

26. Moss, "Thirty Years of Mormonism in Great Britain," 13–16.

27. See Moss, "Thirty Years of Mormonism in Great Britain," 16–21; see also James R. Moss, "The Great Awakening," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 401–2.

28. Currie, *Churches and Churchgoers*, 158.

29. Cuthbert, *The Second Century*, 1:53.

30. D. Michael Quinn wrote an essay detailing the "baseball baptism" program and other tactics of British mission leaders and missionaries from 1958 to 1963. Although historically informative, the article is extremely critical of the policies and activities of President Henry D. Moyle, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, and more particularly of T. Bowring Woodbury, president of the British Mission during this period. See D. Michael Quinn, "I-Thou vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon 'Baseball Baptism' Era," *Sunstone* 16, no. 7 (December 1993): 30–44. For another analysis, see Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 241–53.

31. See *Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: *Deseret News*, *Church News*, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002), 428, 43–34. Although the title gives a 2003 date, the almanac was actually published in 2002, but much of the statistical information reflects that of 2001. Ireland is an independent country and is not included in the statistics with the United Kingdom.

32. See *Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac*, 450–52. Some of these missions have since been renamed, discontinued, or transferred into other missions.

33. Moss, "Building the Kingdom in Europe," *The International Church*, 91–92; see also Cuthbert, "Church Growth in the British Isles," 17–18.

34. Moss, "The Great Awakening," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 411, 416–17.

35. Dennis A. Wright to Alexander L. Baugh, March 2006.

36. Information about the Osmonds and their connections to Great Britain during the 1970s was taken from a number of Internet sites.

37. Moss, "The Great Awakening," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 419–22; see also Cuthbert, *The Second Century*, 1:97–126. See also the report of the first area general conference in *Church News*, September 4, 1971, 3–14. For complete addresses delivered at the conference, see Joseph Fielding Smith, "To the Saints in Great Britain," *Ensign*, September 1971, 2–4; Joseph Fielding Smith, "The Plan of Salvation," *Ensign*, November 1971, 2–7; Harold B. Lee, "The Way to Eternal Life," *Ensign*, November 1971, 9–17.

38. See Anne S. Perry, "The Contemporary Church," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 425–26; see also David Croft, "3 Conferences Held in England, Scotland," *Church News*, June 26, 1976, 3–5; "United Kingdom Area Conference Reports," *Ensign*, August 1976, 77–80.

39. Perry, "The Contemporary Church," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 428–29.

40. Perry, "The Contemporary Church," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 427. At the time, Ireland was still being served by mission districts.

41. Perry, "The Contemporary Church," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 437.

42. Cuthbert, *The Second Century*, 1:197. As noted, in 1960 Church membership stood at 17,332 (see Currie, *Churches and Churchgoers*, 158).

43. See *Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac*, 428.
44. See *Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac*, 515; Gerry Avant, "Hearts 'Brim Full of Gratitude,'" *Church News*, June 13, 1998, 3.
45. Information for Terry Rooney and Brian Adam was obtained from several Internet sites.
46. These include William Law (First Presidency, 1841–44), John Taylor (Quorum of the Twelve, 1838–77, President of the Church, 1877–87), George Q. Cannon (Quorum of the Twelve, 1860–73, First Presidency, 1873–1901), George Teasdale (Quorum of the Twelve, 1882–1907), John R. Winder (Presiding Bishopric, 1887–1901, First Presidency, 1901–10), B. H. Roberts (Seventy, 1888–1933), George Reynolds (Seventy, 1890–1907), Charles W. Penrose (Quorum of the Twelve, 1904–11, First Presidency, 1911–21), Charles W. Nibley (Presiding Bishop, 1907–25, First Presidency, 1925–31), James E. Talmage (Quorum of the Twelve, 1911–33), Charles A. Callis (Quorum of the Twelve, 1933–47), John Longdon (Assistant to the Twelve, 1951–69), Derek A. Cuthbert (Seventy, 1978–91), and Kenneth Johnson (Seventy, 1993–present).
47. See "Elder Derek A. Cuthbert of the First Quorum of the Seventy," *Ensign*, May 1978, 105; "Elder Derek A. Cuthbert Eulogized," *Ensign*, May 1991, 103.
48. See "Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy," *Ensign*, May 1990, 105; "Five Seventies Added to First Quorum," *Ensign*, May 1993, 97–98.
49. *Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac*, 427. These figures do not include Ireland, which is not part of the United Kingdom. As of 2001, Ireland had 2,375 members, one stake, and one mission (*Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac*, 353).
50. Gay, *The Geography of Religion in England*, 195. See also his study titled "Some Aspects of the Social Geography of Religion in England: The Roman Catholics and the Mormons," in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* (London: SCM Press, 1968), 47–76.
51. Robert Buckle, "Mormons in Britain: A Survey," in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 4: 160–79.
52. Tim B. Heaton, Stan L. Albrecht, and J. Randall Johnson, "The Making of British Saints in Historical Perspective," *BYU Studies* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 129.
53. Heaton, Albrecht, and Johnson, "The Making of British Saints in Historical Perspective," 130.
54. Heaton, "The Making of British Saints in Historical Perspective," 129–30.
55. Heaton, Albrecht, and Johnson, "The Making of British Saints in Historical Perspective," 132.

