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## THE ROLE OF LOCAL MISSIONARIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

WILLIAM G. Hartley correctly observed that most “of the [British] mission’s conference presidents, branch presidents and missionaries were British Mormons.”<sup>1</sup> This was definitely true for the Bedfordshire and Durham Conferences. Although it is not always possible to determine the missionaries’ place of nativity, of those engaged in missionary work in the Bedfordshire Conference, only 12 percent can positively be identified as American nationals; at least 72 percent were British natives. The birthplaces of the other 16 percent could not be identified. If the unidentified group were British, then the percentage of British natives would be 88 percent. This was similar for the Durham Conference: of those engaged in missionary work, only 19 percent can be positively identified as American nationals, and 78 percent were British natives. While the place of nativity of 3 percent could not be accounted for, if they were British that would mean that 81 percent of those who engaged in missionary work in the Durham Conference were of British nativity.

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The preponderance of British natives and relative paucity of American nationals can be explained by two phenomena, neither unique to these conferences: first, many men were called up from local ranks to full-time missionary service, and second, an even greater number of male and female converts served as member missionaries without a formal calling. Thus, the success of missionary work and convert baptisms in these two diverse locations during their respective time periods was primarily due to the efforts of local missionaries, who sometimes worked in tandem with American national missionaries but who were equally effective in their absence. What follows to support this assertion is a comparative analysis of the roles and effectiveness of local missionaries who served in the Bedfordshire and Durham Conferences during the Victorian Era. These two conferences were chosen primarily because of their geographic and socioeconomic diversity. Issues to be examined include (1) the calling and impact of local converts who served as full-time missionaries, (2) the role and function of local converts who engaged in “member missionary work,” and (3) the variance in the role and effectiveness of these two types of local missionaries in their respective conferences. Are differences between conferences best explained by local factors, or do similarities suggest larger trends?

### LOCAL CONVERTS CALLED UP TO FULL-TIME SERVICE

As early as 1840, during his first mission to England, Brigham Young instructed that full-time missionaries should be chosen from among members whose circumstances would permit them to devote themselves entirely to the work of the ministry.<sup>2</sup> As Church President in 1857, Brigham Young and his counselors reaffirmed this policy: “Let the Elders go forth without purse or scrip as they did in the days of Jesus, and as they have done since the early rise of the Church. Go forth, Brethren of the Priesthood, having faith in the promise of Jesus Christ. . . . You are called upon to do a great

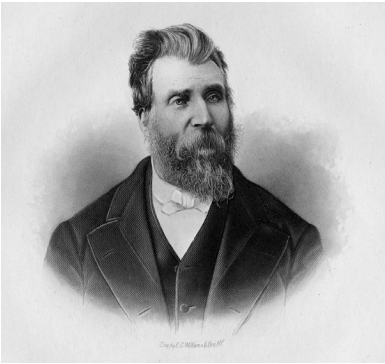
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work; great will be your reward if you do your duty. . . . Let wives and children . . . not hold them back through fear of want. . . . There are many Elders located in the different branches of the European Mission, whose talents are hid: they are lying dormant. We want such to repent and arise from a state of lethargy and go forth among the Gentiles, preaching unto them the Gospel of the Kingdom.”<sup>3</sup>

LDS historian Ronald Walker observed: “The American missionaries might take the lead, but duly ordained English converts carried the ministerial load. This practice allowed Mormonism to shed whatever image it might have possessed as a foreign intruder. Indeed it facilitated the conversion of former preachers . . . to secure Mormon membership and Mormon priesthood on the same day and continue without interruption their errand for the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> Such was the case with Thomas Squires, who served as a full-time missionary in the Bedfordshire Conference from 1844 to 1854. After preaching for the Wesleyan Methodists for many years, commencing at age fifteen, and later for the Baptists, he became dissatisfied with both of them and began preaching what he considered an “improved doctrine.” He then came in contact with the Mormon elders and was converted. On the day of his baptism, “while the Elders were confirming him, and before taking off their hands, [they] ordained him an elder,” and he began preaching the gospel. He served in two branch presidencies before “forsaking all” and serving as a traveling full-time missionary.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the American missionaries, whose calls were announced by a member of the First Presidency during general conference, it was the responsibility of the pastors<sup>6</sup> and conference presidents serving in England to call recent converts to full-time missionary service.<sup>7</sup> John Spiers, who served as president of the Bedfordshire Conference from November 1849 to February 1851, recorded how he received his “mission call”: “Elder Thomas Kington (presiding elder of that conference) came over to the Leigh and called on me and Brother Browell and Jenkins to give up our businesses and devote all our time to the Spirit of the work. This was a severe task for me, and I would gladly have done anything else, but as I

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*President John Spiers, Bedfordshire Conference president, was a native of England who was called to give up his business in order to serve in the local missionary work. Courtesy of Church History Library.*

had been counseled, I arranged my business as fast as I could and prepared to go out.”<sup>8</sup>

A similar pattern was followed in the Durham Conference. For example, Pastor William J. Smith noted: “I called out Morrey Elobis to preach the Gospel in the streets and alleys and warn the people. I[t] was quite difficult to get the Elders to doo [*sic*] their duty. The opposition was so strong.”<sup>9</sup> However, many in the Durham Conference responded to the call. Joseph Foster Doxford is one example among many. After his baptism in

1851, he began preaching and baptizing as a local member missionary while also serving as a branch president. On December 15, 1856, he was called to leave his labors as a local missionary and branch president, as well as leave his business, wife, and children, to serve as a full-time traveling elder until he immigrated to Pennsylvania in 1858 to serve a full-time mission.

Historian William Hartley proffered an additional reason for this practice: Utah simply could not supply enough missionaries.<sup>10</sup> In fact, at the time Brigham Young called all the American national missionaries serving abroad back to Utah in 1857 incident to the Utah War, only eighty-eight were serving in the British Isles, spread over more than thirty conferences and almost seven hundred branches.<sup>11</sup> No missionaries were sent to the British Mission from America in 1858, and only eighteen were sent in 1859. Therefore, more local missionaries were called. By 1874, the year the Bedfordshire Conference was dissolved, only twelve American nationals were serving as missionaries in all of England,<sup>12</sup> and from then until 1883,

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when the Durham Newcastle Conference was dissolved, those numbers remained relatively constant.<sup>13</sup>

### MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

Not only were full-time missionaries called to serve from the ranks of new converts, but also missionaries in both conferences mobilized the efforts of the local membership, for which there is abundant historical evidence.<sup>14</sup> For example, Elder John Spiers, who served in the Bedfordshire Conference, wrote: "Met the brethren in council and as spring was then opening, so that congregations could assemble in the open air, we made arrangements for the brethren to go out into the different villages around town to preach the gospel. . . . We accordingly appointed them to go two by two . . . all summer to establish the gospel in those villages."<sup>15</sup> Traveling elders serving in the Durham Conference followed a similar pattern. Elder William R. Webb reported to President Albert Carrington that proselytizing efforts were "energetically carried on by the traveling [elders] and local priesthood,"<sup>16</sup> and full-time missionaries at a district conference mentioned that "in their outdoor preaching they were cheerfully assisted by the local priesthood."<sup>17</sup> Historians James B. Allen and Malcolm Thorp note that, as a result, "the number of missionaries was greatly expanded and most new baptisms were performed by these local missionaries."<sup>18</sup> This was definitely the case in both conferences. Extant records indicate that 65 percent of baptisms in the Bedfordshire Conference, and 78 percent in the Durham Conference, were performed by English converts.

It is evident from journals that many new members perceived that sharing the gospel was part of their divine duty. Richard D. Poll asserts that because of this, "most conversions occurred among the relatives and friends of active members," especially during times when the numbers of American national missionaries were low, as they were during the Utah War period.<sup>19</sup> An example can be seen in the conversion of Samuel Wagstaff and his wife. They were "very happy . . . perfectly satisfied with their little world" until the sudden death of

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*Samuel Claridge and his wife Rebecca. Samuel was introduced to the gospel by George Coleman, a patron to Samuel's bakery. Claridge soon felt his ordination to the priesthood was a call to preach and took it upon himself to do such. Courtesy of Church History Library.*

Samuel's father. "This shock caused serious thought about things spiritual, which sent him back to the Old Church, but with no satisfaction." In 1849, Samuel's brother joined the Latter-day Saints, and when he shared the gospel with Samuel through a tract entitled *A Voice of Warning*, "its message filled his soul so full" he walked two and a half miles to hear more and consented to baptism that day.

Samuel Claridge was introduced to the gospel in 1851 by George Coleman, a "poor man with a large family, who bought his bread at [Samuel's] bakery shop and grocery."<sup>20</sup> After his baptism,

Samuel was ordained a priest, and, like Brother Coleman and "so many Mormon converts before him," he felt that "ordination to the priesthood was a call to preach and proselyte."<sup>21</sup> He noted in his journal, "It was soon noised abroad that Methodist Claridge was holding forth up in the old stable. Many came to hear, and I soon commenced baptizing, and our numbers kept increasing until our house was too small and the owner of the stable built us a new meetinghouse. We baptized him and his family and many others."<sup>22</sup>

Those men ordained to the priesthood were not the only ones who felt compelled to share the gospel informally with family and friends. Hannah Tapfield King was introduced to the gospel by a young woman, Lois Bailey, who had been her dressmaker for eleven years. After meeting with the full-time missionaries and thoroughly investigating the Church, Hannah eventually joined and immigrated with her entire family to Utah.<sup>23</sup>

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### TWO WORLDS APART: BEDFORDSHIRE AND DURHAM IN THEIR VICTORIAN CONTEXT

Analysis of extant historical documents reveals no significant disparity between the Bedfordshire and Durham Conferences in terms of local converts “called up” to serve as full-time missionaries. Neither do the documents show a disparity between the conferences in the extent of member involvement. There were, however, some differences in the way missionary activities were conducted in these two conferences. In part, these differences may be attributed to diverse geographic, social, and economic conditions. When placing these differences in their historical context, it is necessary to understand key differences between these two regions of England, which in reality were two worlds apart.

During its thirty-one-year existence (1843–74), the Bedfordshire Conference expanded and contracted its boundaries at least seven times before it was absorbed into surrounding conferences; this was typical of various administrative units in the British Mission, which were under constant revision.<sup>24</sup> Despite these periodic changes, however, the Bedfordshire



*Hannah Tapfield King was introduced to the gospel by her dressmaker, Lois Bailey. Courtesy of Church History Library.*

Conference was generally comprised of six counties: Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, and Northamptonshire.<sup>25</sup> The socioeconomic makeup of these six counties was unlike the regions that have been the predominant focus of studies of LDS missionary work in early Victorian England. Scholars have asserted that the majority of early British converts came from the working class in industrialized urban centers.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, the counties comprising the Bedfordshire

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Conference experienced few of the direct effects of the Industrial Revolution that transformed many other parts of Britain in the nineteenth century. There were no major industrial centers to attract large numbers from elsewhere. This was definitely true of rural Buckinghamshire;<sup>27</sup> neighboring Bedfordshire also remained almost completely agrarian, with the additional chief cottage industries of lace making and straw plaiting.

Northamptonshire was one of two Midland counties in this conference. While the Industrial Revolution had transformed many parts of the North and Midlands, it had almost completely bypassed agrarian Northamptonshire. In fact, its primary industry of shoemaking did not become a factory enterprise until the 1890s. Huntingdonshire, also in the Midlands, lacked the fertile soil of other counties in this conference but provided wool for the cloth industry instead of becoming an important textile center. In Cambridgeshire, “general and heavy industry were scarce, even in Cambridge and the larger towns. It was, therefore, also an agricultural county.”<sup>28</sup> Lastly, Hertfordshire had various small rural industries, but agriculture remained the major source of employment since the county was an important source of food for London. In terms of the residents of this conference, it would be more accurate to describe them as “landless laborers” or “the rural poor” than to call them the “working class.” John Clarke, professor of Victorian history at the University of Buckingham, observes: “Class is about more than income—it also involves values and perceptions; and farm workers and factory workers had a rather different take on most things.”<sup>29</sup>

In addition, it has been empirically demonstrated that the success of LDS missionary work in England varied dramatically from region to region. Missionaries laboring in the northwestern counties generally reported success, while those in the southeastern counties, especially those near London, were less successful. London was described as “the seat of Satan,” “the great Babylon,” and “the hardest place I ever visited for establishing the gospel.”<sup>30</sup> While researchers offer varying explanations for this phenomenon, they all concur that by 1844, 93 percent of LDS converts resided in the north and

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west areas of England.<sup>31</sup> In all these studies, the counties in the Bedfordshire Conference were included in the “less receptive proselyting area” of southern and eastern England. Whether due to the nonindustrial, rural nature of the conference or its location, those living in the Bedfordshire Conference were overshadowed in various ways by a socioeconomic construct that was hierarchical, traditional, and repressive.

In contrast to the 4,100 square miles of the six-county Bedfordshire Conference, the Durham Conference was approximately one-fourth that size (1,066 square miles) and throughout its twenty-seven-year existence (1856–83) was almost entirely confined to the single county of Durham.<sup>32</sup> In addition to this geographic difference, which had an important impact on the local members’ and full-time missionaries’ travel time between branches, the residents of this conference were living on the forefront of the Industrial Revolution. Neighboring Newcastle-upon-Tyne had long been the country’s most important coal exporting center, but during this period the majority of the nation’s coal came from County Durham, and its coal ports began to rival the previously held monopoly at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. As a result, the importance of the proliferation of collieries, which made coal this county’s primary industry, cannot be overstated. In addition, County Durham’s Victorian heritage includes many other important industries, such as the leadworks and ironworks that dotted the countryside. For example, Sunderland had become the world’s largest center of the shipbuilding industry, and as such, it was the most important in the country, with additional shipbuilding centers in the county at Tyneside, Teesside, and Hartlepool following right behind. In the midst of the expansive growth of these various industries, County Durham also became home to two of the most revolutionary innovations of the modern era. The world’s first railways emerged here as a necessary part of the colliery industry. Joseph Swan patented the world’s first incandescent electric lightbulb in 1878, a full year before America’s Thomas Edison, and the city of Swan’s residence, Gateshead, in County Durham, became the first city in the world to be lit by this revolutionary invention.

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These various industries and innovations attracted money and labor. This in turn led to a veritable population explosion. County Durham grew from a rural area dotted with small villages to an important industrial center. Its population expanded from approximately eighty-six thousand in 1831 to over four hundred thousand by 1901—with most of the growth being influenced by the need for and availability of labor in the expanding colliery industry.<sup>33</sup> However, this explosive growth was a socioeconomic paradox. As Terry Beynon and Huw Austrin have correctly observed, “Mining was an industry centrally involved in capitalist expansion. In that sense it was clearly part of the ‘modern’ world. However, with its expansion, so too did ‘traditional’ relationships of power and authority maintain themselves.”<sup>34</sup> In the cotton towns, as the masses migrated away from the agricultural caste system dominated by the landed gentry toward the cities and factories, they discarded traditions of the past on multiple levels; in contrast, County Durham experienced no such social revolution. The coal pits were inextricably connected to the landed gentry. The same families that owned the land owned the coal that was being taken from it, and so what happened in County Durham’s industrial revolution was simply a shift from one landed industry to another.<sup>35</sup> Across the county, agriculture was simply replaced by coal and the rural villages were replaced by company towns. Instead of industrial urban centers emerging throughout the countryside, the collier population was scattered because the coal pits were scattered.

## THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF LOCAL MISSIONARIES

What effect, if any, did these diverse geographic, social, and economic conditions have on the activities and effectiveness of local full-time or member missionaries? I have noted elsewhere that the full-time missionaries were transferred regularly between conferences throughout the British Mission, a practice that provided a cross-pollination with a stabilizing effect on their

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mission theology, philosophy, and message. This cannot necessarily be said of their methodology or effectiveness, though, which to a certain degree was subject to local factors.

### THE EFFECTS OF GEOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS

In addition to being situated in the southeastern portion of England—empirically demonstrated to be a less receptive region for proselytizing—the traveling elders in the Bedfordshire Conference were required to travel extensive distances between locations. For example, from November 1860 through February 1861, Elder William Bramall visited fifty-six separate locations in all six counties of the Bedfordshire Conference. He traveled to forty-seven places on foot and to only nine by train, walking over four hundred miles.<sup>36</sup> Elder Robert W. Heyborne recorded, “During my stay in the Bedfordshire Conference I have walked, while visiting the Saints from village to village, 1,207 miles.”<sup>37</sup> This highlights a distinguishing characteristic of missionary work in this conference and provides a possible explanation for some of the unique aspects of how missionary work was conducted there.

In contrast, missionaries serving in the Durham Conference were not as hampered by extensive traveling times and distances. Missionaries’ journals indicate that traveling elders in this conference could often visit more than one branch in a single day, and sometimes as many as three. For example, Elder Chester Call, who served as a traveling elder in this conference from July 1874 to April 1875, regularly recorded visiting more than one branch in a day, and he was able to travel across the entire conference within one month’s time, visiting the several branches along the way.<sup>38</sup> Elder Joseph Lamoni Holbrook, who served as a traveling elder from July 1881 to June 1882, kept a precise daily missionary journal. In it he rarely recorded being in only one place on a given day, giving the distances between branches in miles, which were often in the single digits.<sup>39</sup> On May 7, 1871, Elder John Isaac Hart began the day in

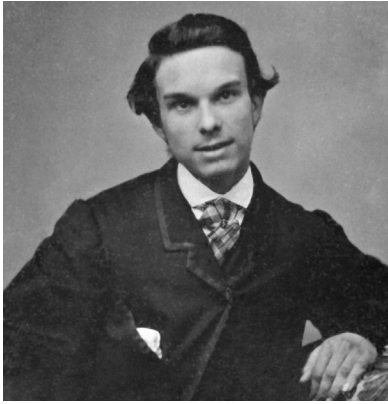
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West Hartlepool, traveled to Castle Eden and then on to “Five Houses,” and finished the day by making the return trip.<sup>40</sup> Although he indicates that this was seventeen miles total, the close proximity of the branches in this conference enabled him to have much more interaction with members and strangers than if he had spent several days traveling from one remote location to another.

The size of the conference also allowed the local member missionaries to teach and baptize with ease those who lived within the proximity of several different branches—something that would have been more difficult in the Bedfordshire Conference. For example, Alexander Black and William Coulthard both served as local member missionaries in the Durham Conference, and they each taught and baptized over twenty-five converts in three different branches.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the only instance of this in the Bedfordshire Conference was in a location where four branches were within six miles of each other.<sup>42</sup> Hence, close proximity appears to have been the key factor of success of local member missionaries working outside of their branch of residence. This might be one explanation for the fact that in the Bedfordshire Conference, local missionaries baptized only 65 percent of the total converts, whereas their counterparts in the Durham Conference were responsible for 78 percent of convert baptisms.

In addition to the contrasting travel demands incident to the different sizes of the two conferences, it is interesting to note the difference in teaching venues as well. While most teaching in the Bedfordshire Conference occurred in members’ homes, the missionaries in the Durham Conference predominantly made reference to teaching “out of doors” or, when indoors, in rented halls. For example, Elder Elijah Larkin, who served as a local missionary in the Bedfordshire Conference from July 1858 to June 1863, mentioned teaching in four different members’ homes,<sup>43</sup> and Elder Thomas Owen King mentioned teaching in twelve different members’ homes.<sup>44</sup> Although missionaries from the Bedfordshire Conference also mention “preaching out of doors” or on “the street corners”<sup>45</sup> or mention

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*Thomas Owen King was a missionary in the Bedfordshire Conference, where much of the teaching was done in members' homes. Courtesy of Church History Library.*

making periodic attempts to hire out a town hall or other building in order to teach larger groups of people, those incidents were the exception, not the rule.

In contrast, outdoor meetings were almost exclusively mentioned in missionary correspondence and journals throughout the twenty-seven-year existence of the Durham Conference. These mentions begin with a letter by Elder Henry Lunt in 1856, in which he notes that "outdoor preaching" had been faithfully attended to,<sup>46</sup> and they continue through missionary correspondence

to a letter by Charles Weatherstone on May 7, 1883, which indicates, "we commenced outdoor preaching as far back as February and have continued the same at favorable opportunities."<sup>47</sup> In addition, it appears that a greater number of large indoor facilities existed because the conference was situated in the midst of so many industries. For example, on July 12, 1871, Elder John Hart recorded, "Then went to South Shields, held a meeting in the afternoon and also in the evening. We had a crowded hall."<sup>48</sup> On September 30, 1881, Elder William R. Webb noted, "Since Conference we have held a great many meetings . . . in doors, and have sometimes addressed large congregations. . . . Elder J. L. Holbrook and myself held two meetings last week in a large school-house in a colliery village."<sup>49</sup> The most likely reason missionaries serving in the Durham Conference were forced to resort to meeting outdoors or in large indoor venues is because, as one missionary noted, "The majority of the brethren in the Durham and Newcastle-on-Tyne Conferences are coal miners,"<sup>50</sup> which would mean they lived in colliery row houses owned and controlled by the land and mine owners. These

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oppressive conditions also existed in the Bedfordshire Conference with members who lived in tied housing; and some mention was also made of teaching in members' homes in the Durham Conference, but these cases were the exception.

### DIFFERENCES IN PROSELYTING METHODS

Another interesting contrast between the Bedfordshire and Durham Conferences was the use of tracts. Only three missionaries in the Bedfordshire Conference mentioned using tracts in their proselytizing efforts. John Spiers, conference president in 1850, instructed members to go out two by two to establish the gospel in the villages surrounding their homes and to "take the tracts with them."<sup>51</sup> Job Smith, conference president in 1851, mentioned "distributing tracts" and taking up "tract subscriptions" from the members for the purpose of "supplying the traveling elders."<sup>52</sup> The only other missionary to mention the distribution of tracts was James Henry Linford, who served as a traveling elder in the conference from 1856 to 1859.<sup>53</sup> It is no coincidence that all three of these missionaries served during the 1850s. Missionaries serving in the Durham Conference during the 1850s also used tracts, as was the case in 1856, when Henry Lunt noted that "the distribution of tracts had been faithfully attended to."<sup>54</sup> This is because mission presidents Orson Pratt (August 1848–January 1851) and Franklin D. Richards (January 1851–May 1852) had directed the mass printing and sales of these pamphlets as the missionaries' major focus during this decade. Due to the expense of it, however, and particularly because of the drain on members' resources, Brigham Young instructed George Q. Cannon, who became mission president in 1860, to discontinue this practice.<sup>55</sup> I have found no historical records indicating that tracts were used in the Bedfordshire Conference from 1860 to its dissolution in 1874.

Historical evidence, however, indicates that the use of tracts resumed after Brigham Young's death in 1877. This was the case in the Durham

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Conference. At a conference held at South Shields on August 4, 1878, conference president Royal B. Young reported that the Saints “had also been very diligent in the distribution of tracts; indeed, the conference had done as much as any other in the Mission.”<sup>56</sup> In excerpts from three successive letters written to President Albert Carrington, Elder William W. Webb noted, “The distribution of tracts is energetically carried on by the traveling elders and local priesthood. . . . Elders W C Parkinson and W H Butler report the saints in the Stockton district . . . have lately effected a new tract organization with the sisters as well as the brethren to take part in the distribution. Also one at West Hartlepool which we hope will result in good. . . . I am pleased to state that . . . [we] are laboring with a will and a zeal to spread the truth and warn the people not with their voices only, but with the distribution of tracts—thousands of which are given to the people in this conference.”<sup>57</sup>

In addition to the use of tracts after 1877, perhaps the most marked difference between the labors of the local missionaries in these conferences was the rate of baptisms in successive decades. The British Mission overall experienced a dramatic increase in baptisms during the first decade of the Bedfordshire Conference, 1843–53. The peak years were 1849–51, with over eight thousand convert baptisms occurring during each of these three years.<sup>58</sup> Then the rate of baptisms in the mission began to decline, as shown in tables 1 and 2. Significantly, the Bedfordshire Conference baptismal rates reflect this overall mission trend: all extant records indicate that 86 percent of all convert baptisms occurred during the first decade of this conference’s existence (1843–53), and only 14 percent occurred the next decade (1854–64), with no convert baptisms on record in its last decade (1865–74). However, the Durham Conference experienced a reverse trend: only 27 percent of its convert baptisms occurred during the first decade of its existence (1856–65), 22 percent occurred during the second decade, and 49 percent occurred during the last eight years of its existence (1876–83); and, at the time, the British Mission overall was experiencing on average less than eight hundred baptisms per year.

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TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF BAPTISMAL  
RATES OF BEDFORDSHIRE CONFERENCE  
TO BRITISH MISSION

<b>Years</b>	<b>Conference Baptisms</b>	<b>% of Total Conference Baptisms</b>	<b>Mission Baptisms</b>	<b>% of Total Mission Baptisms</b>
1843–53	791	86	51,469	59
1854–64	134	14	25,605	30
1865–74	0	0	9,363	11
<b>Total Years of Conference</b>	<b>Total Baptisms in Conference</b>	<b>% of Total Mission Baptisms</b>	<b>Total British Mission Baptisms</b>	
1843–74	925	1.1	86,437	

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF BAPTISMAL  
RATES OF DURHAM CONFERENCE  
TO BRITISH MISSION<sup>59</sup>

<b>Years</b>	<b>Conference Baptisms</b>	<b>% of Total Conference Baptisms</b>	<b>Mission Baptisms</b>	<b>% of Total Mission Baptisms</b>
1856–65	134	27	18,613	55
1866–75	106	22	8,677	26
1876–83	243	49	6,280	19
<b>Total Years of Conference:</b>	<b>Total Baptisms in Conference:</b>	<b>% of Total mission baptisms:</b>	<b>Total British Mission Baptisms</b>	
1856–83	492	1.5	33,570	

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Two aspects of the data in this table are worthy of further examination. First, how is it that the Bedfordshire Conference, which was in the less-productive southeasterly portion of England, could have more than twice the convert baptisms in its thirty-one-year existence than the Durham Conference did in its twenty-seven-year existence, considering that it was situated in the more productive northerly region of England? This can best be explained by the following: (1) 86 percent of the convert baptisms in the Bedfordshire Conference occurred during the single most productive decade of the British Mission. Bruce C. Van Orden noted that throughout England, the fortunes of the Church were in decline by the 1870s. This was due to the effects of religious persecution associated with Church leaders' acknowledgment of the practice of polygamy and the associated antipolygamy campaigns, the economic struggles of the Saints and the difficulty of living in the arid West, and, perhaps most of all, the general apathy and lack of religious fervor in England.<sup>60</sup> This general phenomenon is represented clearly by the decline in convert baptisms in both the British Mission overall and the Bedfordshire Conference, as shown in tables 1 and 2. (2) Despite having more than twice as many convert baptisms numerically, the Bedfordshire Conference made up only 1.07 percent of the mission's total baptisms that occurred during the years the conference existed, 1843–74. This is a smaller percentage than that of the Durham Conference, which contributed 1.47 percent of all baptisms in the mission during its existence, 1856–83.

Second, how can we account for the dramatic increase in convert baptisms in the Durham Conference during the last eight years of its existence, especially considering the fact that the rate of convert baptisms was declining elsewhere in the British Mission? I believe this can best be explained by the following: (1) Missionary factors: When each variable associated with missionary work is analyzed separately, including the mission message, theology, philosophy, proselytizing methods, travel, teaching venues, and the number of missionaries serving, the only variable associated with missionary work that changed significantly during this period

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was the resumed use of missionary tracts. Could the increased rate of convert baptisms—during this eight-year period, about the same as that of the two prior decades combined—at least be partially attributed to this? The fact that the missionaries serving during this time spoke so frequently and positively about their use of tracts indicates that this might be a productive area of future study. (2) Local factors: As already mentioned, the mining and associated industries in this conference attracted labor, which in turn led to a population explosion. Interestingly, according to the British census returns, the population increase between 1871 and 1881 was the most dramatic in county history (21 percent, or 56,314). Significantly, that decade coincides most closely with the dramatic and uncharacteristic increase in convert baptisms in the Durham Conference during the last eight years of its existence. It is likely that this had an effect on the increased rate of convert baptisms.

## CONCLUSION

Although the conferences were diverse in terms of geographic and socioeconomic conditions, the local full-time and member missionaries from both conferences had a dramatic effect on the rates of convert baptisms. For the most part, local missionaries from both conferences utilized the same mission philosophy, theology, message, and methodologies. Notable exceptions include proselytizing limitations caused by the size of the Bedfordshire Conference, as well as variations in teaching venues and the use of tracts between the conferences.

The most important difference between the conferences, however, was the rate of convert baptisms during the final eight years of the Durham Conference's existence. This can at least be partially explained by the population explosion experienced in County Durham, which reached its zenith during this same period. But it may also be partially explained by a change in missionary proselytizing methodology—namely the use of tracts—which cannot be explained by local geographic or socioeconomic factors.

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Regardless of the differences between conferences, the overall impact of local missionaries in both conferences was significant and dramatic and appears to be less likely linked to local factors, suggesting similar trends in other regions of Victorian England.

### NOTES

1. William G. Hartley, "LDS Pastors and Pastorates, 1852–55," in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, ed. Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm Thorp (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 200. Hartley also notes that they were likely to emigrate. To replace them and to train and supervise their successors presented a formidable challenge.
2. Brigham Young, "Minutes of General Conference," *Millennial Star*, July 1840, 70.
3. Brigham Young, "General Instructions to Pastors, Presidents, and Elders," *Millennial Star*, April 11, 1857, 232–33.
4. Ronald W. Walker, "Cradling Mormonism: The Rise of the Gospel in Early Victorian England," *BYU Studies* 27, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 25–36.
5. John Paternoster Squires, *Notes of Interest to the Descendants of Thomas Squires* (Salt Lake City: Eva Beatrice Squires Poleman, 1970), 139. The information about Squires's service as a branch president comes from Robert Hodgert, *Journal of Robert Hodgert*, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
6. "Pastors" were full-time missionaries who supervised several conferences and reported directly to the British Mission president.
7. Young, "General Instructions," 232–33.
8. John Spiers, *Reminiscences and Journal, 1840–1877*, MS 1725, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
9. William Joseph Smith, *Life and History of William Joseph Smith*, 35, MS 17577, Church History Library.
10. Hartley, "LDS Pastors and Pastorates, 1852–55," 202.

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11. Richard D. Poll, "The British Mission during the Utah War, 1857–58," in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, ed. Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm Thorp (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 231.
12. Richard O. Cowan, "Church Growth in England, 1841–1914," in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the British Isles, 1837–1987*, ed. Ben V. Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter (Solihull, England: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 216–17.
13. Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1984), 243.
14. Poll, "The British Mission during the Utah War," 228.
15. Spiers, *Reminiscences and Journal, 1840–1877*, April 15, 1850.
16. William R. Webb, "Correspondence: Interesting Report from Newcastle," *Millennial Star*, January 31, 1881, 73–75.
17. William R. Webb, "Minutes of Newcastle and Durham Conference, Held at Temperance Hall, Tenant Street, Stockton-on-Tees, Sunday, October 5th, 1879," *Millennial Star*, October 13, 1879, 652–56.
18. James B. Allen and Malcolm Thorp, "The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Class," *BYU Studies* 15, no. 4 (Summer 1975): 15.
19. Poll, "The British Mission during the Utah War," 228.
20. Samuel George Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge: Pioneering the Outposts of Zion* (Logan, UT: S. G. Ellsworth, 1987), 1.
21. Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge*, 13–14.
22. Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge*, 14.
23. Leonard Reed, *Cambridgeshire Saints* (Cambridge, UK: Leonard Reed, 2001), 140–94.
24. Poll, "The British Mission during the Utah War," 225.
25. For example, see "General Conference," *Millennial Star*, April 1845, 167, 169, 173; "Minutes of the Special Council," *Millennial Star*, February 5, 1859, 95; Joseph Silver, "Correspondence: Hemel-Hempstead, March 19, 1861," *Millennial Star*, April 6, 1861, 222; H. B. Clemons to Albert Carrington, Stony Stratford,

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- Buckinghamshire, December 24, 1869; and H. B. Clemons, "A Stroll through the Bedfordshire Conference," *Millennial Star*, January 11, 1870, 21.
26. See, for example, Allen and Thorp, "The Mission of the Twelve to England," 9; P. A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of Their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 149; and Tim B. Heaton, Stan L. Albrecht, and J. Randal Johnson, "The Making of the British Saint in Historical Perspective," *BYU Studies* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 120–21.
  27. See Ronald E. Bartholomew, "Patterns of Missionary Work and Emigration in Buckinghamshire, England, 1849–1878," *BYU Studies* 48, no. 1 (2009): 126.
  28. See Joyce Godbear, *History of Bedfordshire: 1066–1888* (Luton, Bedfordshire: Bedfordshire City Council, 1969), 480; R. L. Greenall, *History of Northamptonshire* (London: Phillimore, 1979), 79–80; Michael Wickes, *A History of Huntingdonshire* (Chichester, England: Phillimore, 1995), 95–96; Bruce Galloway, *A History of Cambridgeshire* (Chichester, England: Phillimore, 1983), 93; and Tony Rook, *A History of Hertfordshire* (Chichester, England: Phillimore, 1984), 100.
  29. John Clarke, e-mail message to author, December 13, 2007. Clarke earned a PhD in history from Oxford University with an emphasis in the Victorian period and is the author of *The Book of Buckingham: A History* (Buckingham, England: Barracuda Books, 1984).
  30. See quotations from Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, and George A. Smith in Allen and Thorp, "The Mission of the Twelve to England," 7–8.
  31. See Stephen J. Fleming, "The Religious Heritage of the British Northwest and the Rise of Mormonism," *Church History* 77, no. 1 (March 2008): 85; and John Gay, "Some Aspects of the Social Geography of Religion in England: The Roman Catholics and the Mormons," in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, ed. David Martin (London: SCM Press, 1968), 47–76.
  32. The exceptions to this are those cities that were situated on the opposite banks of the county's northern border, the River Tyne, and southern border, the River Tees—Newcastle and North Shields on the north and Middlesbrough on the south.

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33. See Roger Norris and Douglas Charles D. Pocock, *A History of County Durham* (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore, 1990), 51, 55, 57; and Terry Austrin and Huw Benyon, *Masters and Servants: Class and Patronage in the Making of a Labor Organisation* (London: Rivers Oram, 1994), 20–21, 27.
34. Austrin and Benyon, *Masters and Servants*, 9.
35. Austrin and Benyon, *Masters and Servants*, 18.
36. Marie Brammall Boren, *The Pride of Plumbley: A History of William Bramall (1824–1907)*, comp. Marie Bramall Boren and George and Norma Sumsion Horton (Roy, UT: M. B. Boren, 1998), 109–16.
37. Robert W. Heyborne, “Correspondence,” *Millennial Star*, May 5, 1874, 283.
38. Chester Call Journal, 1841–1908, typescript, MS 17161, Church History Library.
39. Joseph Lamon Holbrook Journal, 1888–August 1882, Church History Library.
40. John Isaac Hart Journal, 1826–1920, MS 20883, Church History Library.
41. See Durham Branch Record, film no. 86995, item 20, 1850–1877, Family History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; Tottingham Branch Record, film no. 0086995, item 22, Record of Members, 1864–1874; Haswell Branch Record, film no. 0087001, item 42, Record of Members, 1852–1869; and Evenwood Branch Record, film no. 0086997, item 10, Record of Members, 1853–1861.
42. See Bartholomew, “Patterns of Missionary Work,” 133.
43. Leonard Reed, *Elijah Larkin: Cambridge Policeman, Utah Pioneer* (Sandwich Island: Reed, 2001), 51, 60, 64–66.
44. Owen King Jr. Journal Transcripts, 1863, 57, 59, 67, 70–73, 80, 83, unpublished journal in possession of Leonard Reed, Cambridgeshire, England.
45. See, for one example, *An Autobiography of James Henry Linford, Sr., Patriarch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of Kaysville, Utah* (Logan, UT: J. P. Smith and Sons, Printers, 1947), 15–18.
46. Henry Lunt, “Home Correspondence: Newcastle-on-Tyne, Carlisle and Durham Conferences,” *Millennial Star*, August 2, 1856, 494.
47. Charles Weatherstone, “Open-Air Preaching and Good Prospects in the Newcastle Conference,” *Millennial Star*, May 21, 1883.
48. John Isaac Hart Journal, 1826–1920, MS 20883, Church History Library.

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49. William R. Webb, "Correspondence: Report From Newcastle Conference," *Millennial Star*, October 10, 1881, 650–51.
50. Lunt, "Home Correspondence: Newcastle-on-Tyne, Carlisle and Durham Conferences," 494.
51. Spiers, *Reminiscences and Journal, 1840–1877*, April 15, 1850.
52. Job Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, 99, 113, 122, 132, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
53. *An Autobiography of James Henry Linford*, 23.
54. Lunt, "Home Correspondence: Newcastle-on-Tyne, Carlisle and Durham Conferences," 494.
55. See David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Pamphleteering" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1982), 65–71, 240–43; and Donald Q. Cannon, "George Q. Cannon and the British Mission," *BYU Studies* 27, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 3–4.
56. Royal B. Young, "Minutes of a Conference Held in the Central Hall, Chapter Row, South Shields, Sunday, August 4, 1878," *Millennial Star*, August 26, 1878, 540.
57. See Webb, "Correspondence: Interesting Report from Newcastle," 73–75; Webb, "Correspondence: Report From Newcastle," *Millennial Star*, April 11, 1881, 235–36; and Webb, "Correspondence: Report From Newcastle Conference," 650–51.
58. By 1851, Britain could boast of more converts in her homeland than in America. Church historian Bruce C. Van Orden notes, "In 1851 more than 32,000 members of the Church resided in Britain; this figure, an all-time high for the nineteenth century, exceeded the total membership of all the Church in all of North America—including Utah." *Building Zion: The Latter-day Saints in Europe* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 94.
59. Population statistics add further insight into the data presented. County Durham grew from 217,353 in 1861 to 329,985 in 1881—an increase of 112,632. Baptisms during the period of 1856–65 were approximately 0.06 percent of the total population compared to 0.07 percent of the total population in that county in 1881. This suggests, as indicated, that the growth in convert baptisms from 1856 to 1883 in County Durham was uncharacteristic of the rest of England and cannot be attributed entirely to population growth—especially when compared

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to the Bedfordshire Conference (six counties) which grew from 836,431 in 1841 to 1,033,875 in 1881. Despite this population growth, baptismal rates in the Bedfordshire Conference decreased dramatically from 0.09 percent of the total population in 1853 to approximately 0.01 percent of the total population by 1864, a pattern more characteristic of the rest of the England.

60. Bruce C. Van Orden, "The Decline in Convert Baptisms and Member Emigration from the British Mission after 1870," *BYU Studies* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 103–4.