

George Q. Cannon and the British Mission

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Donald Q. Cannon

George Q. Cannon was both a product of and a contributor to the British Mission. He was converted in Liverpool in 1840 and returned as mission president in the 1860s. His conversion story really begins with his aunt Leonora Cannon. She had emigrated to Toronto, Upper Canada, where she met and married John Taylor, likewise an emigrant from England. A Mormon missionary, Parley P. Pratt, converted and baptized the young couple in May 1836. Following their baptism, the Taylors moved to Kirtland, Ohio, and subsequently to Missouri and Illinois. Called to serve as an Apostle in 1838, John Taylor went with others of the Quorum of the Twelve on a mission to England in 1839, carrying a letter of introduction to George Cannon from his wife Leonora. This “referral” gave him easy access to the Cannon home in Liverpool. After Elder Taylor’s initial visit, George Q. Cannon’s mother told him, “George, there goes a man of God. He is come to bring salvation to your father’s house.”¹ Elder Taylor met with the family again and introduced them to the Church by singing some of the hymns of Zion, testifying to the divine calling of Joseph Smith, and loaning the family a copy of the Book of Mormon. The Cannons studied the book with great zeal. Upon completing the book George Cannon concluded, “an evil-minded man could not have written it, and a good man would not have tried to write it with the intent to deceive.”² The Cannon family was baptized and emigrated to Nauvoo, arriving in the spring of 1843.

When they arrived in Nauvoo, young George had a remarkable experience concerning the Prophet Joseph Smith. Although he had never seen a picture of Joseph Smith, George Q. Cannon knew him instantly. This spiritual experience had a profound influence upon the young man. George Q. Cannon’s mother had died at sea, and his father died in August 1844. Subsequently, George went to live with his uncle John Taylor. From John Taylor, who was editor and publisher of the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, George learned the printing business. He later put this training to good use when he published *The Western Standard*, an LDS newspaper in San Francisco. This paper became a powerful force for good and established George Q. Cannon’s reputation as editor and writer. While in San Francisco in the mid-1850s, he also published the Book of Mormon in Hawaiian. He had translated the book while serving as a missionary in Hawaii.

Returning to Utah during the Utah War, George received still another publishing assignment. Brigham Young directed him to take a printing press to Fillmore, Utah, and publish the *Deseret News* at that location. The *Deseret News* was published in Fillmore from April to September 1858. George Q. Cannon's training and expertise as a printer and publisher would enable him to render valuable service to the Church in the years ahead.³

Answering a call to serve a mission to the eastern states, young George Q. Cannon embarked on still another on-the-job training experience. His responsibilities were threefold: to correct misinformation about the Church; to preside over the branches of the Church in the East; and to act as Church emigration agent. His efforts to present correct information regarding the Mormons were greatly enhanced by his association with Colonel Thomas L. Kane, famed "friend of the Mormons." With his contacts, Colonel Kane was able to introduce Elder Cannon to influential editors and politicians. In his role as presiding officer over the branches, he had the responsibility of starting missionary work again after the interruption caused by the Utah War. His greatest responsibility lay in helping the Saints gather to Zion. One of his duties included meeting the Saints who arrived on board ships from Europe and arranging for their rail travel to Iowa, where they went by wagon or pushed handcarts to the Salt Lake Valley.⁴

While serving in the eastern states, George Q. Cannon was called to fill the vacancy in the Council of the Twelve created by the assassination of Parley P. Pratt in May 1857. Elder Pratt had prophesied that George Q. Cannon would become a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, and this call fulfilled that prophecy. The membership of the Church sustained George Q. Cannon in April conference in 1860, and President Brigham Young ordained him on 26 August 1860. Wilford Woodruff noted that George Q. Cannon was the thirteenth Apostle whom Brigham Young had ordained. A few days later, Elder Woodruff recorded what Brigham Young had said on the office and calling of an Apostle:

When an Apostle is Called & ordained all the keys of the kingdom of God upon Earth are sealed upon him and God reveals his mind & will through that source to the Children of man for the government & salvation of the Children of man.⁵

Within a month of his ordination, Elder Cannon was called to serve in the British mission presidency. He accepted this call at considerable personal sacrifice since he had been away from Salt Lake City more than he had been home for over a decade. His second wife, Sarah Jane Jenne, whom he married in 1857, had only spent six months with him. His first wife, Elizabeth Hoagland, had also suffered from their lengthy periods apart. Doubtless, these factors caused him some concern as he embarked on still another mission for the Church.

The call specified that he would serve with two other Apostles, Amasa M. Lyman and Charles C. Rich. These three would constitute the European mission presidency, with headquarters in Liverpool, England. It is clear that George Q. Cannon was the junior member of the presidency. Amasa M. Lyman had been called as an Apostle in 1842 and had wide experience in Church service. Charles C. Rich received his call to serve in the Quorum of the Twelve in 1849 and had also served in many important positions. As Lawrence Flake has pointed out, "George Q. Cannon's call to the mission presidency demanded a full measure of the tact and diplomacy for which he was becoming well known."⁶

As George Q. Cannon began his service in the European Mission, he brought with him not only the requisite tact and diplomacy, but also other important traits and skills. The experience in printing and publishing which began in Nauvoo would serve him well in England. In fact, the problems associated with Church publishing in Great Britain may have led to his call to the mission presidency. George had also developed business acumen and organizational skills. All in all, he was well prepared for the task which lay ahead.

When Elder Cannon landed at Liverpool, he entered a country quite different from the United States. England in the 1860s was a combination of "British Empire" and "Victorian England." On the international scene, the British Empire reached around the globe to such remote areas as Australia, India, South Africa, and Canada. Because of its imperial strength, Great Britain was the most powerful country in the world. On the domestic scene, Victorian England featured political liberty and social restriction. Political liberty rested on centuries of historical development, whereas the social restrictions of Victorian England were a late manifestation of Puritanism. The immense wealth produced by the Industrial Revolution had created an amazing diversity of classes, and wealth and poverty existed side by side. Industrialization had propelled lower-class workers from agricultural settings to urban ghettos. Cities such as London, Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester experienced dramatic population explosions. The lower classes felt abandoned by Methodism, which had become a middle-class movement, and were grasping for a new religion. The Mormon missionaries proselytized primarily among the working classes.⁷

The Civil War, which began in 1861, severely impaired diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Great Britain. This situation had all the greater impact upon Elder Cannon because of his belief in the prophecy made by the Prophet Joseph Smith concerning the Civil War and the U.S. turning to Great Britain for aid.⁸ While in New York, on his way to England, he had learned of the events concerning the Civil War and expressed appreciation for the revelation on war (D&C 87) which Joseph Smith had received.

George Q. Cannon, like so many early Latter-day Saints, saw the war in terms of the intervention of God in the affairs of men.⁹

President Cannon's responsibilities in Great Britain required him to serve as publisher, emigration agent, administrator, and spokesman for the Church. These four spheres of activity kept him extremely busy and required all the strength and ability he could muster.

In the area of Church publications, President Cannon inherited a host of problems. In the 1850s, a policy of distributing printed matter to individuals on credit had emerged. This system offered the advantages of making it easier for missionaries to obtain literature and of encouraging printing in large quantities, with attendant economies. There were, however, several distinct disadvantages: it centralized the writing and printing, thereby establishing a monopoly; it increased dependence on non-Mormon publishers; it encouraged a large debt; some printed items failed to sell and a surplus of printed matter accumulated.¹⁰ Writing to President Brigham Young, President Cannon complained of "having 2,590 volumes of Sister E. R. Snow's poems, 19 having been sold in three years." He went on to say that "there are editions of some works, which at the ration they have been sold during the past three years will take half the millennium to sell."¹¹ George Q. Cannon's training and experience enabled him to move vigorously to find solutions to these problems. He gave away many of the tracts to be used by the members. Some items which contained errors were simply destroyed.

Prior to George Q. Cannon's term as mission president, Church printing had been contracted out to non-LDS printing establishments in England. President Cannon supervised the creation of a Church printing office, purchasing a steam-driven press, type, and other items needed for such an operation. In a letter to Brigham Young he outlined some of the problems they faced and wrote, "I have been compelled to employ mostly gentile printers, which I do not like; we have a few in the Church; but they are in the ministry, and can ill be spared."¹² Ultimately the printing office proved a success.

The main item published in the Church printing office was the *Millennial Star*. This magazine had been published since 1840 and was very influential not only in England but throughout the Church. The *Star* was an important means of communication within the Church and also served as a missionary tool. Stressing the importance of the *Star*, President Cannon told the missionaries: "If the Elders were to make it a practice to constantly read the *Star*, they would realize considerable information and benefit therefrom. It would prove to them just as profitable as the Scriptures."¹³

Elder Cannon had the responsibility of writing editorials for the *Millennial Star*. These editorials were to instruct, preach, and prophesy, and his journal indicates that they consumed a substantial portion of his time

and energy. The entry for Tuesday, 16 July 1861, for example, reads: "On Tuesday afternoon and evening engaged in writing an editorial for the 'Star' entitled 'The Past and Present of the Church.'"¹⁴ Sometimes the editorials were signed and sometimes they remained unsigned, and they covered a wide range of topics. He commented, for example, upon war: "War is one of the scourges which man, by his sinfulness, has brought upon himself. There is one way—and but one way—to avert it, and that is for the people to obey God's commands."¹⁵ Most of his editorials were on gospel topics. He wrote, for example, concerning the struggle between good and evil, truth and error: "The contest between truth and error is all the time going on; and, as every day rolls on, that contest increases in its vindictiveness."¹⁶ Many editorials contained sage advice and counsel on how to live the gospel successfully: "The older I grow the more I am sensible of the necessity of increasing my exertions and of living according to the principles of salvation."¹⁷ "As we are prepared to receive truth our heavenly Father will bestow it upon us."¹⁸ "The only way to maintain our position in the kingdom of God is to so conduct ourselves that we may have a living testimony of the truth continually dwelling in our bosoms."¹⁹

One item which appeared in the *Millennial Star* in 1862 is of special interest. Most talks given by the mission presidency were considered routine items, but one talk by President Amasa Lyman eventually attracted considerable attention. On 16 March 1862, President Lyman spoke on the "Nature of the Mission of Jesus" at Dundee, Scotland. In that discourse, Elder Lyman "virtually denied the necessity of, and the fact of, the 'Atonement of Jesus Christ.'"²⁰ He said, for example, "the Gospel is nowhere said to have been constituted of the death of Jesus"; and "I do not want you to believe that the blood of Jesus has cleansed you from all sin."²¹

The Dundee Sermon caused little excitement until 1867, when someone brought it to the attention of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. After being confronted by the brethren, Lyman published a retraction in the *Deseret News*. Within a few months, however, Apostle Lyman was again preaching sermons that repudiated the Atonement. Later that year, he was dropped from the Quorum of the Twelve and in 1870 excommunicated from the Church.²² Amasa Lyman had experimented with Spiritualism after joining the Church and was particularly influenced by the ideas of Andrew Jackson Davis. Davis taught that the shedding of blood by Jesus was unnecessary. Eventually, as Loretta Hefner has written, Lyman's "loyalty to spiritualism had surpassed his loyalty to the Mormon church."²³

Other items which issued from the Church press included books, tracts, pamphlets, and a hymnbook. Capitalizing on his earlier printing experience, Elder Cannon published a volume of editorials from the *Western Standard*. He hoped these editorials would be helpful to the youth of the

Church in their efforts to live the gospel. In a sense, this work is a harbinger of his later work in the *Juvenile Instructor*.

With his experience and expertise in printing and publishing, George Q. Cannon was able to make a distinct contribution to Church printing in England by solving problems both technical and financial, clearing out surplus and waste material, and strengthening the *Millennial Star* and other Church publications with his editorial skills.

His responsibilities related to emigration resulted from the doctrine of gathering, which is a basic principle of the Restoration. The doctrine of gathering was revealed in 1830, and the keys of gathering were restored by Moses in 1836. Church leaders had given heavy emphasis to this doctrine in their preaching, especially in the years immediately preceding George Q. Cannon's British mission and during the time when he was in the British Isles. President Brigham Young had this to say concerning gathering the Saints:

We are gathering the people as fast as we can. We are gathering them to make Saints of them and of ourselves. Probably many of them will apostatize, though some will not apostatize until you give them their endowments; and then, if you do not speak out of the right corner of your mouth, they will apostatize; and if you do not laugh out of the right corner of your mouth, they will go. We are gathering a few that will be faithful in the midst of this people, and prepare themselves to be crowned kings and priests unto God. By-and-by you will see the Saints flock together. Will they come merely by one or two shiploads? No; it will require many more ships than we have heretofore employed to bring home the gathering thousands to Zion. Millions of people that now sit in darkness—that are now, to all appearance, in the region and shadow of death, will come to Zion.²⁴

Ever since the earliest missionary work in England, faithful Saints had been gathering to Zion. Brigham Young had arranged for the first ships to carry emigrants as early as 1840, and about one thousand per year emigrated between 1840 and 1860.

George Q. Cannon was not a beginner when it came to arranging for emigration. He had been in charge of emigration while on his mission to the eastern states, prior to his call as an Apostle. The experience and business acumen which he gained at that time would stand him in good stead as he assumed the responsibility for emigration in England in the 1860s. His principal responsibility was in securing ships for the Saints who wished to travel to America. Concerning ships chartered during the 1860s Conway Sonne has written:

More than 20,000 Mormons emigrated across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans aboard sailing vessels during the 1860s. Another 3,900 emigrated from Liverpool to New York in steamships in the closing years of the decade. These ten years were the high water mark of Mormon overseas migration, for at least 24,600 Saints traveled by ship to Zion in that period, under both canvas and steam.

There were 46 sailing vessel passages from 1860 through mid-1868. Of these voyages 40 were made by ships, five by barks, and one by a brig. Eighteen vessels had made more than one voyage with Mormon companies. Of the sailing passages 25 originated at Liverpool, one at Le Havre, one at Melbourne, eight at Hamburg, five at Port Elizabeth, and six at London. All voyages terminated at New York with three exceptions—one at San Francisco and two at Boston. Thirty of the voyages were under the American flag, ten under the British, five under the German, and one under the Norwegian.²⁵

The size of the Mormon emigrant companies during the 1860s was significantly larger, with an average 424 emigrants compared with an average of 266 in the 1850s. Sailing vessels used in the 1860s were larger and faster, although the passage time was only slightly improved. Shipboard conditions, however, were much better than earlier. Among the best new ships were the *William Tapscott* and the *Monarch of the Sea*. A total of 2,262 Saints sailed on the *William Tapscott*.²⁶ Describing the experience on board during an Atlantic crossing in the 1860s, Sonne writes:

To many emigrants the crowded life on a ship for weeks on end was a shock. Even under British law, which allowed three adult passengers for each five tons of registered tonnage, that provision was not a generous space allocation. A 1,000-ton vessel, for example, could carry 600 adults, a goodly number in confined quarters. Overcrowding also created sanitation problems, such as inadequate toilet and bathing facilities. For this reason emigrants preferred American ships that had two heads, or water closets, on each side of the deck. Even then these enclosures could smell like cesspools.²⁷

Securing seaworthy vessels was a difficult and challenging task. Faced with such difficulties, President Cannon often sought the Lord's help. In such instances the Lord blessed him and the Saints by providing ships where professional shipping agents were unable to do so. Writing to Salt Lake, he reported: "I feel that I have been exceedingly blessed under the circumstances, as many offices in town are compelled to refund the people their money, it being out of their power to furnish them passages."²⁸ In this instance one sees that rare combination of business skill and spirituality.

Chartering ships involved large amounts of money. George Q. Cannon proved to be a hard and skillful bargainer as he negotiated contracts with ship captains and shipping tycoons. His diary contains frequent references to these negotiations. After securing the *Hudson* for the same price as the *Monarch of the Sea*, he gave credit to the Lord, writing, "I wish to thank the Lord for the success which has attended my efforts to secure ships for our people."²⁹

The Civil War had a detrimental impact upon the procurement of ships. The U.S. and Great Britain maintained a very delicate peace, but the possibility of armed conflict was a constant source of anxiety. Elder Cannon wrote to President Brigham Young:

The government is making active preparations for war. Great activity prevails in all the navy yards of this country, and the military are being prepared as rapidly as possible. It is reported that two of Cunard's steamships, besides other steamers, have been chartered for the purpose of taking troops to Canada.³⁰

As president of the European Mission, George Q. Cannon encountered problems related to international tensions on the European continent as well as in Great Britain. He reported, for example, some of the difficulties confronting native Danish missionaries:

According to present appearances Germany and Denmark are likely to come to blows over the Schleswig Holstein difficulty. In anticipation of a war, Denmark is bringing her army up to its maximum strength. Many of our native missionaries are being drafted into the army and they are considerably excited over the matter. A few of the Saints, young men, who have means and who are liable to the draft are leaving for this country and are pushing on from here to the States. It seems as though it will not be long before those who are in Europe who wish to escape the dreadful necessity of having to take the sword to fight against their neighbors will also have to flee to Zion.³¹

In addition to securing ships, President Cannon had responsibility for forming companies of emigrants. This involved working with mission officers at various levels throughout the British Isles and Europe. Once the groups had been formed and arrived in Liverpool or some other port of embarkation, instructions had to be given. Reports from some of the Saints en route to Zion indicate that Elder Cannon often gave such instructions himself. Naomi Dowden wrote: "Brother George Q. Cannon gave the departing Saints instructions and appointed officers for the company." John Durant, a passenger on another voyage, made this entry: "Brother George Q. Cannon came out to us and organized our brethren for the trip, and preached to us about being patient with one another and trying to help one another."³² Elder Cannon recorded in his journal that he had organized the company on board the *John J. Boyd* and then commented: "The Lord is visibly blessing them in their efforts to escape from Babylon."³³

President Cannon's organizational ability captured the attention of some non-Mormon British observers, including the famous nineteenth-century writer Charles Dickens. Most LDS emigrant ships had sailed from Liverpool, but the *Amazon*, the ship which Dickens visited, sailed from London. There is evidence that Dickens deliberately chose a Mormon emigrant ship as the subject for one of his essays to be included in *The Uncommercial Traveller*. He had been interested in the Mormons as early as 1842, when he mentioned them in his *American Notes*,³⁴ but he admitted to some bias concerning them. He wrote that he was ready "to bear testimony against them if they deserved it, as I fully believed they would."³⁵ To his surprise, he found them to be a much more praiseworthy group than he had imagined. Describing the ship's company, he wrote:

nobody is in an ill-temper, nobody is the worse for drink, nobody swears an oath or uses a coarse word, nobody appears depressed, nobody is weeping. . . . Now I have seen emigrant ships before this day in June. And these people are so strikingly different from all other people in like circumstances whom I have ever seen, that I wonder aloud, "What would a stranger suppose these emigrants to be!"³⁶

Apparently Dickens had an interview with George Q. Cannon concerning the Mormon emigration process. As a result of this interview and also his observations, Dickens wrote the following favorable description of Elder Cannon:

The Mormon Agent who had been active in getting them together, and in making the contract with my friends the owners of the ship to take them as far as New York on their way to the Great Salt Lake, was pointed out to me. A compactly-made handsome man in black, rather short, with rich brown hair and beard, and clear bright eyes. From his speech, I should set him down as American, probably a man who had "knocked about the world" pretty much. A man with a frank, open manner, and unshrinking look; withal a man of great quickness.³⁷

George Q. Cannon characteristically failed to write anything in his journal about Charles Dickens but chose instead to write about a prophecy, made earlier by Elder Eli B. Kelsey, that had been partially fulfilled by the sailing of the *Amazon* from London rather than Liverpool.³⁸

During his mission years in Great Britain, George Q. Cannon supervised the emigration of over thirteen thousand European Saints. When these emigrants arrived in New York or Boston, they traveled by railroad and steamboat to Florence, Nebraska. The actual route they followed included a rail trip from New York to Quincy, Illinois; a boat trip from Quincy to Hannibal, Missouri; a rail trip from Hannibal to St. Joseph, Missouri; and a boat trip from St. Joseph to Florence, Nebraska. During the 1860s, Florence became a major outfitting location for the journey to Utah. A new "down and back" plan had been devised by Brigham Young, which called for wagon trains to carry surplus Utah oxen and flour "down" to Florence and to bring poor immigrants and eastern goods "back" to Utah. This system made it possible for the Church to transport the European Saints from Nebraska to Utah at practically no cost, whereas it had cost about fifty dollars per person to provide new wagons and teams for them at Florence. Some idea of the large number of Saints who came through Florence can be gained from using the figures for one year, 1861. During that year, an estimated 3,924 Latter-day Saints emigrated from Florence to Utah. Most of that number came from Europe.³⁹

Thousands of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles and on the European continent had an opportunity to "gather to Zion" as a result of the efficient work of George Q. Cannon. His belief in the principle of gathering, his skill

in organizing emigrant companies, and his ability to charter the best ships all worked together for the good of the Saints.

As a member of the mission presidency, Elder Cannon also had many and varied administrative responsibilities, for the Church organization as well as for the missionaries. In the 1860s the average LDS church membership in the British Isles numbered about fourteen thousand, a number that maintained itself despite large numbers of emigrants. There were about 361 branches of the Church during the years that Elder Cannon served in the mission presidency. On the average in the early 1860s there were 1,670 missionaries.⁴⁰ Although the gospel had been preached in England since 1837, the Church was still in its frontier stages. There were problems in the branches, conflicts among members, and a high rate of apostasy. These problems required much of the time and energy of Elder Cannon. His journals contain frequent references to his responsibilities in conducting conferences throughout the mission. He records, for example, that a semiannual conference was held in the Temperance Hall in Liverpool on 6 October 1861. He notes that the Church had been denied the use of the building earlier and so the opportunity to use it now reflected that attitudes toward the Church had improved. Two thousand people attended this conference.⁴¹ The following week, he attended conferences in Leicester and Nottingham.⁴² Generally, the brethren received a more cordial welcome in outlying areas than they did in Liverpool and London. Elder Cannon comments:

They do not appreciate the presence of the servants of God as they should do. In the country branches our arrival is hailed with gladness, and it is not an uncommon thing for the Saints to walk 15, 20, and 25 miles to have the privilege of listening to the Elders from Zion.⁴³

The talks the brethren gave were often published in the *Millennial Star* and consequently became available to the membership at large. Their sermons were either calls to repentance, statements of encouragement, or instructions on how to implement gospel principles. Amasa M. Lyman spoke, for example, on "the importance of laboring to develop practical purity in life which renders us acceptable to God."⁴⁴

Often Elder Cannon's work with the members involved pain and frustration. His journal entries contain many references to Church courts. Concerning the case of an elder in Glasgow who was cut off from the Church for adultery, he wrote: "How much misery and trouble a wicked man can make!"⁴⁵ President Cannon recognized that public examples of sexual immorality could severely damage the Church.

From the very beginning, George Q. Cannon spent a great deal of time with the missionaries, training, counseling, and making assignments. In fact, a party of Mormon elders traveled with President Cannon to the mission

field. He had been a successful missionary in Hawaii and had a strong conviction of the necessity and importance of missionary work. As mission president, he demanded the highest standards for himself as well as for his missionaries. He required the elders to be clad in a black suit and wear a silk hat. He urged them to earnestly seek the Spirit of the Lord and to preach by that same Spirit. He warned them about the evils of the world which would undermine their effectiveness. Chief among those evils, as he saw it, was adultery. He warned and prophesied that “the Elder who indulges in this sin (adultery) will be led to destruction.”⁴⁶ When missionaries did yield to temptation, President Cannon dealt with them forcefully. If they could be reclaimed, he accomplished that by counseling. If their sin was too serious, he cut them off from the Church. When missionaries became discouraged and wanted to leave their missions early, he urged them to remain. Commenting on one such elder, he wrote: “I have reasoned with him on the impropriety and failure of indulging in such feelings and have pointed out to him how injurious at the nonfulfilment of his present mission would be to him.”⁴⁷

As mission president, George Q. Cannon directed the labors of missionaries not only in Great Britain, but in Scandinavia, in Europe, and even in Africa. These responsibilities caused him to travel to areas of the mission outside England. Twice he traveled to the Continent to visit the missions in France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland. He also visited the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. During such visits, he took time out for some sightseeing. In Denmark, for example, in the fall of 1862, he traveled extensively throughout Copenhagen and rural Denmark.⁴⁸ After a day of sightseeing in Copenhagen, he noted this in his journal: “In the afternoon walked out on the citadel walls in company with the brothers. It is called Frederikshavn and is a most formidable fortress and is said to be impregnable.”⁴⁹

During President Cannon’s tour of duty, other churches of the Restoration launched their missionary work in England. Indeed, the first foreign mission of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) was in England. The earliest RLDS missionary called to serve in England was Charles Derry. The story of Charles Derry is of special interest because he was LDS before he was RLDS. Raised in the Church of England, Derry converted to Mormonism in 1850 and gathered to Utah in 1853. A combination of circumstances—the death of his wife, poverty, disenchantment with LDS church leadership—caused him to leave Utah in 1859. Having moved to Nebraska, he was baptized into the RLDS movement in 1861. In 1863 he met Joseph Smith III, who called him to serve as a missionary in England.⁵⁰ He arrived in Liverpool on 4 February 1863. Only two days later he visited George Q. Cannon, whom he called “president

of the Brighamite churches in England.”⁵¹ Elder Derry requested permission to speak in LDS church meetings. President Cannon refused his request. Charles Derry charged that George Q. Cannon treated him with contempt. President Cannon recorded his side of the story in his journal, noting that Derry had “denied the faith” while in Utah. His view of Derry’s request is shown in the statement: “I did not view him and those with whom he associated in the same light that I did an honest sincere sectarian for they had known the truth and denied it while others were in ignorance.” He went on to say that “the object of their labor is to assail, defame and destroy the servants and Church of God.”⁵²

Although both men were spiritual descendants of Joseph Smith and shared a common religious heritage, there was no love lost between them. Perhaps differences in their concept of authority and differences in their approach to teaching the gospel had created a gap which they seemed incapable of bridging. LDS missionaries taught people of other faiths outside of Mormonism, while RLDS missionaries seemed intent upon converting “Brighamites” to their faith.

After failing to make much progress in Liverpool, Elder Derry traveled to Chester, West Bromwich, and other communities in the area. In West Bromwich he reported attending a Brighamite meeting, but said their minds were poisoned against him. After months of perseverance and hard work, he succeeded in baptizing Henry Tyler, and eventually a branch was organized on 17 May 1863 at West Bromwich, consisting of Tyler and five others. Buoyed by the arrival of additional missionaries, Charles Derry worked even harder, preaching and converting in both England and Wales. A publication, the *Restorer*, a sixteen-page monthly published in Folk Welsh and English at Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, soon followed. Elder Derry finished his mission to England on 21 June 1864. His hard work had paid rich dividends. During Derry’s tenure five mission districts had been created, and the Reorganized Church had gained a solid foothold in Great Britain.⁵³

During his administration as president of the European Mission George Q. Cannon acted as a spokesman for the Church. He represented the Church’s position to the non-LDS audience in Europe through two principle channels: the *Millennial Star* and various non-LDS newspapers in the British Isles. Perhaps the best example of his role as spokesman is his response to Darwinism. Charles Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* had been published in 1859. Darwin’s thesis stated that all living animals and plants had evolved from earlier forms and that species were a result of natural selection. The implications for religion seemed clear. If Darwinism is literally correct, man was not created by God, but was only a biological organism, another form of animal life. President Cannon recognized the implications of Darwinism and the theory of evolution. There is substantial historical

evidence to prove that he read *Origin of the Species*. In the front of his journal for 1862 there are several pages containing financial transactions. Following these financial records and preceding the first regular diary entry for 1862 are some notes from Darwin's famous book. The heading reads: "High Rate of Increase—Darwin in the Origin of Species, page 67." This heading is followed by several paragraphs of notes on the subject indicated.

George Q. Cannon's formal response to Darwinism, printed in the *Millennial Star*, had been preceded by other editorials in that periodical. For example, the lead editorial for 25 February 1860 is on the subject of "Creation" and stresses creation by "that creative Intelligence by which it was organized." President Cannon's editorial entitled "The Origin of Man," which appeared in the *Millennial Star* in October 1861, contains one of his most powerful and eloquent statements. He begins by noting that "the origin of the human race is a subject that has of late been warmly discussed." He then summarizes the theories proposed by several ethnologists and zoologists of the day. Finally, he introduces Darwin:

Last, but not least, comes the Darwinian theory of "natural selection." In his recent work upon the "Origin of Species," Darwin proceeds upon the hypothesis that there have been no special creations of separate species of either vegetable or animal forms of life, but that external conditions, such as variations of climate and food, domestication or cultivation, natural habit, volition, and co-adaptation, &c., will account for all the changes and varieties observable in the different classes of vegetables and animals existing on the globe, whether on the land, in the sea, or in the air.

Having surveyed the theories of the day, President Cannon began his refutation: "But the chief, wide distinction that exists between man and all the different classes of animals, from the lowest to the highest, lies in his mental and moral capacities. In his spiritual endowments man stands pre-eminent and alone." He develops his case, using the scriptures and statements from modern prophets, including Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and concludes:

Taking the doctrine of man's origin as seen from this higher point of view, and comparing it with the low assumptive theories of uninspired men, such as those we have alluded to, how great the contrast appears! "Look on this picture"—Man, the offspring of an *ape*! "And on this"—Man, the image of *God* his *Father*! How wide the contrast! and how different the feelings produced in the breast! In the one case, we instinctively shrink with dread at the bare insinuation; while in the other, the heart beats with higher and warmer and stronger emotions of love, of adoration, and praise; the soul is cheered and invigorated in its daily struggles to emancipate itself from the thraldom of surrounding evils and darkness pertaining to this lower sphere of existence, and is animated with a purer and nobler zeal in its onward and upward journey to that Divine Presence whence it originally came.⁵⁴

George Q. Cannon had started a lifelong study of the origin of man. He continued to study, write, and publish on this topic until the time of his death. In the *Deseret News*, the *Juvenile Instructor*, the *Journal of Discourses*, and in other Church publications, he frequently expressed his ideas on the origin of man. On one occasion, for example, he wrote: "Adam was no gorilla, no squalid savage of doubtful humanity, but a perfect man in the image of God."⁵⁵ On another occasion, he made this affirmation: "It cannot be a question with any person of faith in our Church as to the origin of man. . . . We descended from God."⁵⁶

Elder Cannon also published articles in English newspapers. Hoping to reach the largest possible audience, he faithfully represented the position of the Church on issues of the day. On 20 August 1861, he wrote to John Thomas Dexter, thanking him for publishing his remarks at a London conference in *The Christian Cabinet*.⁵⁷

In his multifaceted roles as publisher, emigration agent, Church and mission administrator, and Church spokesman, George Q. Cannon made a very significant contribution to the growth of the kingdom. This contribution was not made without considerable personal sacrifice. His mission necessitated his absence from some of his family and also took a heavy toll on those family members who accompanied him to England. His wife Elizabeth traveled with him to the mission field in 1860, and two of their children, Georgiana and George H., were born in England. In 1863, Elder Cannon decided to send Elizabeth and the children home because of her poor health and troubles related to the Civil War. The children became ill while crossing the plains. Georgiana died during the journey, and George H. died shortly after arriving in Utah. It should be noted that Elder Cannon's first son, George Quayle, had died earlier.⁵⁸ Regarding the death of his children, he wrote: "It is a source of grief to me; but I have been led of late to call upon the Lord to prepare me for every trial."⁵⁹ George Q. Cannon was willing to make such sacrifices because of his fervent testimony of the Restoration. He expressed it best in his first address to the Saints following his return from England:

I rejoice exceedingly in the knowledge God has given to me that this is his Work—that he has established it never more to be thrown down, and that it is his mind and will it should roll forth and increase until it fills the whole earth.⁶⁰

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3. Jerrel L. Newquist, ed., *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Zion's Book Store, 1957), 1:xxi–xxiii.
4. Lawrence R. Flake, “George Q. Cannon: His Missionary Years” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1970), 147–67. This is an exceptional dissertation. It provided an excellent foundation for my own study. Since its completion, additional source materials have become available which Flake did not have access to.
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9. George Q. Cannon, Journal, 16 July 1861, Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives). These journals provide unusual insight into the life and thought of George Q. Cannon.
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37. Ibid., 225.
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53. *RLDS History* 3:398-403.
54. *Millennial Star* 23 (19 October 1861): 652-54.
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56. Ibid. 27 (1 December 1892): 720. LDS interest in the question of evolution has not been limited to George Q. Cannon. From 1859 until the present there have been vocal spokesmen on both sides of the issue. An excellent summary of this discussion is found in Richard Sherlock, "A Turbulent Spectrum: Mormon Reactions to the Darwinist Legacy," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 33-59. A collection of many Church leaders' statements on evolution is found in Reid E. Bankhead, comp., *The Fall of Adam, the Atonement of Christ, and Organic Evolution* (Levan, Utah: RAM Books, 1978).
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