

The Making of British Saints in Historical Perspective

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INTRODUCTION: THE EARLY MISSION

On 19 July 1837, Heber C. Kimball and his companions arrived in Liverpool to establish the British Mission. The personal and institutional costs of this mission were monumental. Separation from loved ones, illness, and poverty seemed the common lot for the missionaries. Staffing the mission took many of the most influential leaders at a time when the Church was struggling against financial crisis and the threat of internal disintegration in the United States. Subsequent events, however, proved the benefits were well worth the efforts devoted to the British Mission.

In the first six months after the first missionaries arrived, six hundred baptisms were reported.¹ This auspicious beginning was a harbinger of success for decades to come. (Reported numbers of baptisms and emigration from the British Mission are compared with growth in total Church membership in table 1.) The entire Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was called to serve in the mission between 1840 and 1841.² Although not all were able to fulfill this calling, a majority did so with phenomenal success. In the 1840s, British baptisms exceeded the total reported growth in Church membership, and in the 1850s, both baptisms and emigration exceeded reported growth in total Church membership.³ By the middle 1850s, however, British baptisms and emigration began to decline until, by 1920, they were only a small fraction of the growth in a rapidly expanding Church. While not all of these figures can be taken at face value, they well illustrate the importance of the British Mission for continuity and growth of the Church. Without substantial infusion of new members, the losses from attrition and mortality could have threatened the very existence of the new religion.

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TABLE 1
British Baptisms, Emigration, and Growth
in the Mormon Church: 1840–1919

Time Period	British Mission Baptisms	British Mission Emigration	Growth in Church Membership
1840–49	34,299	5,784	31,295
1850–59	43,304	12,355	31,878
1860–69	16,112	9,924	31,394
1870–79	6,295	6,913	39,954
1880–89	6,061	8,219	54,758
1890–99	3,742	4,849	88,537
1900–09	7,587	3,195	105,598
1910–19	3,911	892	130,682

Source: Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1937), 244–45.

In addition to supplying the large influx of new members, the British Mission produced many individuals who would play key leadership roles in the new religious movement. These included William Clayton, George Q. Cannon, B. H. Roberts, and James E. Talmage. Moreover, the *Millennial Star*, published in Britain, served an important role in codifying the doctrines and policies for the young organization. Thus, the British Mission provided spiritual and intellectual leadership to go along with new adherents.

But what has happened between this period of early dramatic growth and the contemporary Church in the British Isles? In this paper, we will attempt to address this important question. We will begin with a brief review of some of the social and economic conditions which, in combination with the characteristics of the missionary effort itself and the religious message of the missionaries, facilitated this early success. We will then discuss changes within British society and the LDS church which set the stage for a different pattern of conversion and Church growth in contemporary Britain.

CONVERSION IN THE EARLY BRITISH MISSION

The content, form, and spirit of the missionaries' message was well matched to social conditions of the time. The Industrial Revolution and associated rapid population growth, urbanization, and political reform created an atmosphere of social change. Religious revival and the emergence of new reform-oriented religious organizations reflected the flux in traditional values. Population mobility, occupational shifts, questioning of tradition, and transformations in the patterns of daily living weakened social ties and left a displaced population. This population appears to have been the major source of new converts.⁴

The Mormon message was well suited to this context. Lay clergy with a message of restoration of the simple gospel of Christ must have

offered assurance to a displaced segment of society. The unpretentious style of missionaries from laboring families would appeal to a similarly situated audience. Add to this the opportunity to emigrate and help build the kingdom of God and we have a message that matches many of the needs which must have been felt by potential converts.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the early British Mission is the pattern of selectivity regarding characteristics of converts. Accounts of the early mission suggest at least three aspects of selective conversion, including socioeconomic status, geographic location, and prior religious affiliation.

Apparently most early converts came from the lower and working classes.⁵ Descriptions of new members tell a story of unemployment, hunger, and poverty. Members of the British nobility, aristocrats, and factory owners were rarely found among the congregation. Data on the occupational status of emigrants indicate that only 11 percent were middle-class and the largest single group (21 percent) were general laborers.⁶ Perhaps the new working classes found particular appeal in a religious movement led by missionaries from working-class origins who included in their message criticism of capitalist exploitation and the promise of a bright future associated with building a new Zion in America. Proselytizing methods such as street meetings and sermons in revival religious groups were also more likely to reach the working class who felt unattached from more established religions.

Proselytizing efforts were more successful in certain industrialized sections of the Midlands than in London, Scotland, or Ireland. Early efforts in London, the center of trade and political control, were very discouraging.⁷ John Taylor opened the work in Ireland and subsequently other missionaries were assigned to continue; but efforts in Ireland were not very fruitful. Missionaries did establish a thriving group in Scotland, but this could not compare with the dramatic growth in the Midlands. A majority of converts were also from urban centers. In a country that was approximately half urban, 90 percent of Mormon emigrants originated in urban areas. Thus, urban centers of the industrial heartland provided the type of people who were most inclined to join the Church.⁸

Converts were also more likely to come from revivalist organizations than from the well-established and increasingly middle-class oriented mainline churches.⁹ The United Brethren, in particular, were a major source of new members. In at least one case, an entire congregation simply changed affiliation. Apparently ministers from the more established groups offered substantial resistance to missionary efforts. In contrast, smaller, less-established groups even offered the missionaries the opportunity to preach in their services. Although a majority of converts had some degree of prior religious involvement, many of those with a religious background did not come from the Church of England.¹⁰

Other demographic characteristics suggest the British converts may have differed in additional ways. In the Manchester area, women outnumbered men, and a substantial percentage were single.¹¹ Taylor, however, notes a surprisingly even balance of males and females, and a greater representation of older people and children among Mormon emigrants than would normally be expected in a migrant population.¹² These latter statistics probably reflect the family orientation of the Church.

The centrality of emigration in the missionary message no doubt helps account for the dramatic success, as well as for the demographic characteristics, of converts. The Church-sponsored migration was remarkable in that the Church provided instructions on appropriate procedures, supervision of emigrant groups, and some financial support. In a materialistic vein, it might seem that missionaries used the migration system to entice potential members, while some people joined merely to receive assistance in emigration. Taylor, however, provides convincing argument that missionaries and converts alike were sincere in the motive to establish a religious community.¹³

High rates of conversion among working-class populations belonging to new religious movements in the geographic heart of the Industrial Revolution suggest that the Mormon message was particularly attractive to those who were less well integrated into British society. Lacking strong ties to existing organizations, such people were attracted to a gospel message which offered new meaning and a sense of belonging. These new converts then played a major role in establishing a Mormon society in the Rocky Mountains.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE CHURCH

Since the founding of the British Mission 150 years ago the Church has changed dramatically. Above-average fertility¹⁴ and successful proselyting have propelled the obscure organization with six formal members to what is projected to be the next major world religion.¹⁵ This growth along with broader social change has transformed the organizational structure of the Church. A bureaucratic structure has been created to manage the day-to-day business of building, keeping track of members, maintaining a substantial missionary force, informing local congregations of policies and programs, performing temple work for the living and the dead, and so on. Corresponding to this change, many of the features that were attractive to the first British converts are no longer as salient as they once were.

Part of the Church's success story includes acquisition of financial resources to cover the cost of its extensive programs. In fact, the appellation of *corporate empire* has even been applied.¹⁶ Given the

modest assets of the Church in comparison with leading corporations and other major churches, as well as the nature of most activities which consume rather than produce income, the term *corporate empire* hardly seems appropriate. Nevertheless, the Church does stand in a very different financial position than it did in 1837. Some might even claim that free enterprise has been adopted as part of the ideology, though peaceful coexistence in diverse economic settings has required a position of neutrality with respect to the politics of economic regulation. The virtues of hard work and financial independence are extolled; the government dole and a something-for-nothing mentality are anathema; but it is now unusual to hear Church leaders make explicit statements regarding specific economic systems. In short, the critical comments against capitalism are no longer heard.

The current missionary message, in particular, is devoid of economic ideology. All missionaries learn a standardized message that focuses on the restoration of priesthood authority and prophetic guidance, the gospel of salvation through the Atonement of Christ, the scriptural authenticity of the Book of Mormon, and obedience to commandments of God. This message is the same in all countries. The sense of an imminent millennium has weakened. Gone is the program to assist immigration to a new land to build Zion and the corresponding opportunity for a new economic start in life. Rather, members are encouraged to stay where they are to build the local organization.

Even though this reformatted message may not be quite so compelling to one particular segment of the population, it probably has broader audience appeal. Those who are more established in the social order, who are not displaced by technological and social change, and who are not seeking new economic opportunities elsewhere will find this new approach more appealing.

Along with the shift in emphasis in the missionary message, there has also been a shift in the methods of contact. Street meetings and invitations to speak to congregations of other denominations are no longer operational. Door-to-door tracting and contacting friends and relatives of existing members are now the primary mechanisms for finding new converts. These approaches are probably less selective than the methods used by earlier missionaries. In particular, door-to-door tracting has the potential for contact with broad segments of society. Of course, there is a great deal of selectivity in terms of who will listen to the missionaries; but at least the initial contact is much more diversified.

In short, we think that changes in Church organization along with associated changes both in the emphasis placed on various aspects of the gospel message and in the methods used to disseminate this message have reduced the attractiveness to certain segments of society but have achieved a broader appeal. Thus, in comparing the contemporary British

experience with this earlier period of rapid growth, we might expect to find less selectivity in the types of people belonging to the Church.

CHANGES IN BRITISH SOCIETY

Just as broad social change has modified the nature of the LDS church, so has British society been transformed. Other social institutions have modified to accommodate the Industrial Revolution. Although unemployment continues to be a problem, and the decline of the British Empire has left the country in a disadvantaged economic position relative to other Western industrial societies, the large-scale adjustments required in the 1850s have not been repeated. The religious atmosphere in the British Isles changed in significant ways since the period of the 1830s and 1840s. While other factors might also be important, we will focus primarily on these two areas: the secularization of British society and the establishment of the British welfare state.

The Secularization of British Society

The early nineteenth century was a period of significant religious fervor in Britain. Cox notes that during this time the British people “either endured or entered into” a succession of religious crusades and missions that were designed to Christianize or re-Christianize the country.¹⁷ While the relative success or failure of this movement is still debated by social historians, it is evident that “devotional sentiment and strictness of attention to religious services”¹⁸ increased among the middle and upper classes, and the working-class poor were constantly being confronted with new forms of social Christianity. In other words, this was a period that literally “swarmed” with religious activity. Established, rationalistic denominations became more animated and new denominations appeared with frequency throughout the industrial area. Into this setting the early Mormon Apostles arrived and began to spread their message of restoration.¹⁹

The pattern of decline since that period, however, has been both dramatic and relatively constant. Following the 1850s came, first, what Cox calls the ethical revolt against Christian orthodoxy, followed by the Darwinian revolution in thought, both of which made “agnosticism respectable if not universal by the turn of the century.”²⁰ Religious institutions began to wither away to the point that by the early 1900s Arnold Bennett could say

I never hear discussion about religious faith now. Nobody in my acquaintance openly expresses the least concern about it. Churches are getting emptier. . . . The intelligentsia has sat back, shrugged its shoulders, given a sigh of relief, and decreed tacitly or by plain statement: “The affair is over and done with.”²¹

The continuing pattern of decline since the mid-nineteenth century is now well documented. While survey data for the United States show a steady or even increasing rate of attendance at weekly worship services, the opposite pattern is evident in Great Britain. Wilson notes that

the decline in attendance appears to have taken place in waves, first among the working class and later, in the twentieth century, among the middle class. The Church of England suffered the first losses; the decline of the Free Churches did not begin until the early twentieth century. Until very recently, Catholics maintained high rates of attendance, but lately there has been a marked decline; between 1955 and 1975 regular Mass attendance among the total Catholic population in England and Wales dropped from 76 percent to 32 percent.²²

Gallup's study of religious attitudes and practices of young adults in the British Isles indicates that only about one in twenty even mentions religious activities when asked "How do you usually spend your weekends?" Similarly, fewer than 10 percent think religion should be very important in one's life. Approximately five times as many young Americans of the same age include religious activities in their weekend plans and feel that religion should be important.²³ Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi report that in 1970 only about 5 percent of the adult population in the Church of England even attend Easter religious services, and the percentage continues to decline.²⁴

As a result, the churches in England are almost empty on an ordinary Sunday morning, and religion no longer seems to be a matter of much import to the average Britisher. As Cox notes, "Books about recent history usually fail to mention it altogether, and the subject of religion often provokes boredom. The churches are regarded as quaint and harmless but peripheral institutions."²⁵

The most widely-used explanation to account for the decline in British religiosity is the sociological theory of secularization. Although scholars continue to debate the usefulness of this theory, no one has come up with a more acceptable alternative. Secularization theory is based on the general assumption that the related forces of modernization, urbanization, industrialization, and the rationalization of thought contributed to a decline in both religious values and religious institutions. While the concept of secularization is used in many different ways, it basically refers to three related processes: (1) a decline in religion as a major social force in society, (2) a transposition from sacred to secular explanations of events, and (3) an increasing frequency with which individuals look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of a religious interpretation. Faith in reason—with its empirical, pragmatic orientation to the world—replaces faith in revelation and religious tradition.

These forces were clearly evident in the Britain of the last half of the nineteenth century. It cannot be accepted as totally conclusive

whether their presence is the major determinant of the decline in religion, but the outcome has been a society that now stands out among all modern nations in the degree to which its people are unchurched.

Arrival of the Mormon Apostles in England during a time of great religious agitation was certainly fortuitous. In this setting, the message of the restored gospel rang true to many who were seeking and were willing to listen. The dramatic downturn in both numbers of British converts and immigrants that begins in the middle 1850s closely follows the pattern of downturn in religious activity in British society more generally. By the last few decades of the century when convert baptisms had fallen from highs of over eight thousand per year to two or three hundred, religious activity among the British populace had also fallen dramatically. Thus, while forces having to do with the Church in America may have been important in this dramatic downturn, the missionary work was certainly not unaffected by forces that were also operating in British society.

The Creation of the British Welfare State

The creation of a welfare state has also helped to ameliorate deprivations that were experienced in the nineteenth century. Health care and other forms of public assistance have established a minimum level of subsistence for a vast majority of the population. Indeed, this minimum level of assistance exceeds any type of long-term economic opportunity that could be provided by the LDS church. The economic incentives to join the Church are no longer a major attraction.

This is not to imply that people join the Church for purely economic reasons. Rather, in a period of economic insecurity, a religion which offered as part of its program new economic opportunities would be more attractive in areas where deprivation was high. People whose basic needs are taken care of feel less need to search for a better life.

In 1837 governmental welfare policies were very different from the present day. Intervention on behalf of the poverty-stricken was solely in the form of the Poor Laws—a work-release program which had not been significantly revised in two hundred years. This “relief” was comprised of converted storage facilities where able-bodied poor who needed assistance were sent to work for the barest minimum wages. These workhouses were feared and despised by all working classes because of the desperate conditions inside them—conditions which were a favorite subject of contemporary authors such as Charles Dickens.

The government held the opinion that noninterference with private enterprise—or laissez-faire capitalism—was not only in the best interest of the public at large, but that it was also in agreement with the decrees of God. Victorian British society considered poverty a state ordained by

Deity.²⁶ Poverty was readily distinguished from pauperism and only the latter was regarded as a social problem which demanded attention from the government.²⁷ Religious leaders preached the doctrine of economic stratification from the pulpit. An excerpt from Wilberforce's *Practical View of the System of Christianity* states their position well:

[The] more lowly path [of the poor] has been allotted them by the hand of God; . . . it is their part faithfully to discharge its duties and contentedly to bear its inconveniences; . . . the present state of things is short; . . . the objects about which worldly men conflict so eagerly are not worth the contest; . . . the peace of mind which Religion offers indiscriminately to all ranks affords more true satisfaction than all the expensive pleasures that are beyond the poor man's reach.²⁸

Another widely-held public attitude conveyed that poverty was the result of a flawed character.²⁹ Although Darwin's theories on the evolution of species would not be published for another twenty-two years, by the time the first LDS missionaries landed, the seeds of his concept of "natural selection" were appearing in British social thought. Poverty implied moral incapacity. The most general attitude held that those who were able to develop the self-help mentality would "free [themselves] from the thralldom of poverty."³⁰ Those who could not were left to fend for themselves as best they could, while the prosperous were deemed worthy of their station and were praised for their moral stability and strength.

Living conditions for the working-class poor were dismal. Enclosure of private lands for the raising of sheep, along with increased inflation due to the importing of precious metals from the Americas, had forced thousands to move to the urban areas. Such rapid growth posed enormous problems of housing and sanitation.³¹ At first, cellars, attics, and any unused space was converted to apartments. Soon after, sprawling public housing tracts were built around the factories. Adequate and sanitary water supplies or facilities were practically non-existent. Local rivers and streams served as both water supply and sewer.³²

Overcrowding, disease, and pestilence were the common lot of the urban slum dweller.³³ Free education was to be had only if you were a cadet, a pauper, or a felon. Military academies, workhouses, and prisons provided some formal education, but unless you worked in a factory which provided schooling to its employees, education was a privilege reserved for those who could afford to pay for it.³⁴ Unemployment always loomed on the horizon. The labor pool was so vast that factory owners could (and did) pay the barest minimum wages.³⁵ Any labor conflict was resolved by replacing troublemakers with those who were eagerly awaiting a chance at a job. Even the slightest tremor in market conditions could send a wave of layoffs through an entire community.

Social reform was a topic of interest to the middle class who had been created as a by-product of the Industrial Revolution.³⁶ Political parity between the land-endowed aristocracy and the industrial middle class was largely achieved through the lobbying efforts of the Anti-Corn Law League and the subsequent repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. The interests and the influence of the industrialists became more established in the legislative body of British government.³⁷ Various social movements and related legislation in the last half of the nineteenth century were designed to improve social conditions, but these efforts were largely unorganized, ad hoc, and piecemeal. The major areas of improvement came from education, medical treatment, housing, health, and sanitation.

Legislation of a state-sponsored education program was delayed because of the great debates between the representatives of the church and the Government.³⁸ Slowly, the church's influence diminished. The Department of Education was organized in 1856. Various acts of Parliament reduced attendance fees and made parents responsible for their children's attendance at school, resulting in an 18 percent increase in enrollment from 1862 to 1866. In 1869 the National Education League was formed as a lobbying organization for public education, and the Education Act of 1870 provided for the "right of every child to some form of schooling."³⁹

State-supported health care was minimal. The Poor Law workhouses provided an excellent location for infirmaries, and by 1861, 80 percent of all hospital beds were in workhouse wards.⁴⁰ The Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867—regarded by most as the start of an efficient state medical service—provided for the building of many specialist hospitals along with an ambulance service in the capital. Many public infirmaries and dispensaries were constructed in the 1870s and 1880s.

Although there was a lag in legislation on housing improvements, with the enfranchisement of the rural workers in 1884 such legislation was quick in coming. From that time until the turn of the century, acts aimed at establishing a standard of acceptable housing were passed, and the general reform experienced earlier by medical treatment and education was joined by the housing industry.⁴¹

Perhaps the greatest progress was made in health and sanitation. In Manchester, by 1858, there were ten local acts designed to improve the Health Corporation. In 1846, Liverpool had elected the first Medical Officer of Health. In 1852 the Leeds Waterworks Act organized the first fully municipal water supply. Between 1858 and 1872 many local and general sanitation, sewage, and disease prevention acts were passed which further solidified the powers of the municipal water supplies and health and sanitation departments. Finally, in 1875, with the passage of

the Public Health Act, the implementation of a national public health system was accomplished.⁴²

There is no clear consensus on exactly what constitutes a welfare state; however, in Great Britain it is generally described in terms of implementing several acts of Parliament, all of which became effective on 5 July 1948. These acts (the National Insurance Act, National Assistance Act, and the National Health Services Act) were designed as a “social security network which protected everyone from destitution or want.”⁴³ Under this system, “the whole population was provided for in times of loss or interruption of earnings . . . , in times of exceptional family expenditure, . . . and on the death of the breadwinner.”⁴⁴ Each of these pieces of legislation was designed to provide relief for unexpected circumstances.

The urban laborers of Great Britain in the nineteenth century represent a unique group. This body of working-class people—displaced from their rural homes, earning barely enough to survive, living in cramped, unsanitary conditions—were forced to work twelve to fourteen hours per day. If the father died or was incapacitated because of illness or injury, the family was faced with the public workhouses.⁴⁵ The urban laborers undoubtedly felt separated and restricted from becoming like those middle-class people who managed the factories and owned the shops in town. The laborers were ripe for new ideas, both political and religious. Social legislation in the nineteenth century was probably not sufficient to make dramatic change in working conditions. The cumulative effect of reform—much occurring in this century—has, however, created a very different context for contemporary missionary efforts.

In sum, social change in British society has reduced the number of people who may be interested in joining a new religious group. This diminution of potential audience coupled with above noted changes in the LDS church have created a very different context for missionary work in the 1980s.

CONTEMPORARY CHURCH GROWTH AND SELECTIVITY

British membership growth over the last fifty years is shown in table 2. Convert baptisms and associated growth remained low until the 1960s. There was a large spurt of baptisms in the early 1960s, with a continued higher number in the 1970s and early 1980s. According to the 1987 *Church Almanac*, LDS membership totaled 130,500 in Ireland and Great Britain. This figure is 2 percent of the worldwide LDS membership, but only .02 percent of the total population of the United Kingdom.⁴⁶ In the 1980s the British membership is growing at an annual rate of 2.5 percent. This is substantially lower than the LDS total rate of growth of 4.9 percent per year but is still a respectable rate of growth implying

TABLE 2
Membership and Convert Baptisms in the British Isles: 1937–85

Period	Convert Baptisms	End of Period Membership
1937–49	1,290	6,457
1950–59	6,739	19,332
1960–69	57,638	85,217
1970–79	38,230	114,558
1980–85	28,838	132,810

Source: Derek A. Cuthbert, *The Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 197–98.

a doubling of population every twenty-eight years. The absolute growth in this two-year period is 18,252 persons. This growth is greater than the number of baptisms during most years of the nineteenth century; but, of course, the base population of the Church and the country is much larger, as is the missionary force. Thus, although the rate of growth of the LDS Church in Britain is quite high, the influence of the British membership on total Church membership is very small.

The diminished influence of British Saints can also be seen by examining the national origins of General Authorities. Even though the number of General Authorities has grown substantially, only one current member of the group was born in Great Britain. Nor can Britain lay claim to any publications comparable to the *Millennial Star* in influence.

Part of Britain's reduced influence is obviously a result of the massive early emigration which served to establish the core of the Church in the United States. In addition, the missionary effort has been very successful in many other countries since World War II. Mexico now has more than double the membership of Britain, and the Philippines will soon surpass Great Britain to become the largest LDS population outside the American continents. Nevertheless, the major reason for the decline is that the baptism rate (based on either the LDS or the total national population) is very small in comparison with the mid-nineteenth century.

Comparison of demographic characteristics of British Saints with the national population (see table 3) also suggests that the degree of selectivity in terms of who belongs to the Church is not as great as it once was. The LDS population is disproportionately young, female, and white. There are more one-person households in the LDS population, but also more large households. Marital status for the national and LDS populations is similar, with the exception that there is a higher percentage of divorced persons in the LDS population. Family size is larger in the LDS population. These differences are generally consistent with the family orientation of the Church (divorce being the exception) and the notion that younger people are more likely to change religious status.⁴⁷

TABLE 3
Sociodemographic Characteristics of British Mormons and the Population of Britain

		<u>Great Britain</u>	<u>British LDS</u>
Percent of population aged 0–29		43	53
Percent of population aged 65 or over		15	5
Males per one hundred females		95	92
Percent nonwhite		4.5	2.9
Percent one-person households		22.0	27.0
Percent households with six or more persons		4.0	8.3
Average household size		2.7	2.8
Percent married:	male	67.0	66.3
	female	61.8	59.7
Percent divorced:	male	2.9	7.6
	female	3.5	9.4
Percent never married:	male	26.4	24.8
	female	20.0	22.2
Average number of children (for women married between 1955–59)		2.4	3.2
Percent of families with three or more children		9.0	20.0
Percent with postsecondary education:	male	16.0	17.0
	female	10.0	12.0
Percent employed:	male	80.0	70.0
	female	58.0	40.0
Percent unemployed:	male	10.0	13.0
	female	6.0	8.0
Percent in occupation groups (males):	higher-grade professional	14.3	19.0
	lower-grade professional	12.1	10.3
	clerical-sales	9.6	20.7
	small proprietors	8.0	1.8
	lower-grade technicians	12.0	3.1
	skilled manual	22.0	34.5
	laborers	21.8	10.5
Percent in income groups (in pounds):	1–4,999	64.2	63.6
	5,000–9,999	31.5	33.1
	10,000 or more	4.3	3.3
Percent convert baptisms			79.7
Percent of church membership (before conversion to Mormonism):			
	Church of England, Scotland, etc.	57.0	52.3
	Other Protestant	18.8	19.1
	Catholic	13.0	11.4
	Jewish	.8	.5
	Non-Christian	2.7	.1
	None	7.7	16.7

Turning to socioeconomic status, education and occupational status of the LDS population are somewhat above the national average; but the income distribution is similar, and unemployment is higher. There is little evidence here that those of lower status are particularly involved in the Church, and some evidence to the contrary.

Interestingly, a large majority of the British Saints are convert baptisms. There has not been a substantial buildup of second or third generation Mormons with a long tradition of Church experience and culture. Moreover, converts come from religious backgrounds that match the national population, with the exception that a disproportionate number of converts had no religious preference prior to conversion; 57 percent of the national population belong to the major national denomination (that is, Church of England or Scotland), compared to 52 percent of converts. Thus, there is little selectivity of converts from unusual religious groups.

In sum, LDS members are representative of the national population in many respects. The patterns of selectivity that marked dramatic Church growth in the nineteenth century are no longer present.

CONCLUSION

We have outlined changes in the social and religious conditions associated with LDS membership growth in Britain in very broad strokes. It is interesting to compare these changes with the Stark-Bainbridge theory of religious movements.⁴⁸ The emergence of a new religious group in a era of rapid social change and patterns of selectivity of early converts is consistent with their model. As the Church has improved its economic position, Stark and Bainbridge would also predict a decline in the selectivity of membership. On close inspection, however, the Stark-Bainbridge model does not fit in some important respects.

Religion, according to Stark and Bainbridge, is attractive because it can promise rewards that are not attainable by other means.⁴⁹ People who cannot obtain worldly goods provided by the economic system will be most attracted to new religious movements, and the new religions, in turn, emphasize supernatural compensation for religious behavior. As upward mobility improves the ability of members to obtain a greater share of worldly rewards, characteristics of the members become less distinctive, and less emphasis is placed on supernatural benefits. Contrary to this model, the early Church apparently placed more emphasis on opportunity for economic advancement through emigration to the United States, whereas the current missionary message places more on obtaining salvation by conformity to religious principles. Of course, socioeconomic achievement may be emphasized in many subtle ways in the contemporary Church, but this is the topic for another paper. The

main point is that the early Church was, in contrast to the Stark-Bainbridge model, able to combine a religious message of salvation and an imminent millennial transformation with the opportunity for improvement in economic circumstances. Perhaps this relatively unique combination helps explain success of the early missionary effort.

The Stark-Bainbridge model also fits better in the United States where religious affiliation and participation is quite common. Current low levels of religious involvement in Britain suggest that a society may be able to get by without a religious answer to existential questions about the human condition. If it can, LDS missionary efforts may fall upon rocky or dry soil. On the other hand, if Mormon theology can provide new meaning, current rapid growth may be a harbinger of things to come.

At this point, a cautionary note of explanation is in order. We have outlined important social conditions in British society and within the Church which set the context within which conversion occurs. This context alone cannot predict precisely who or how many will join the Church. For example, our description of membership selectivity and the match between the missionary message and British social conditions might lead to the prediction that millions would have joined the Church and emigrated in the 1850s and 1860s. That millions did not clearly demonstrates the limitations of our approach. The spiritual nature of conversion lies beyond the scope of the perspective we offer here. We do feel, however, that prevailing social conditions play an important role in how many and which types of people seek out and join new religions.

In retrospect, it seems remarkable that Joseph Smith would call some of his most talented leadership away to Britain at a time when the Church was struggling for survival in the United States. It is even more remarkable that the missionaries were called at a time when social conditions were ripe for missionary success in Britain. If the mission calls would have been delayed another twenty years, it may have been too late to reap such success. It is even questionable whether the Church could have survived the twenty years with enough strength to send missionaries, lacking the added strength of the British converts. The mission call and the heroic efforts of the missionaries appear to have come at just the right time.

One can only imagine what the Church would be like had it not been for the large number of converts who were baptized in Britain and immigrated to Utah. But Britain no longer plays the role as a major source of growth. Rather, it is comparable to several other mission field or peripheral countries that form the satellites of an internationally expanding church. While we study and celebrate the important role Britain once played, we should also be sensitive to the role and problems which it and similar countries face as small segments of a rapidly growing church centered in the Mountain West of the United States.

NOTES

¹Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain* (1937; reprint, Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1984), 244.

²James B. Allen and Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Classes," *Brigham Young University Studies* 15 (Summer 1975): 500.

³This logical impossibility serves as a caution against overinterpretation of statistics; but the high baptism rate also shows how important British conversion was.

⁴Ronald W. Walker, "Cradling Mormonism: The Rise of the Gospel in Early Victorian England," *BYU Studies* 27 (Winter 1987): 25–29; see also Phillip A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of Their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 148–57.

⁵Allen and Thorp, "Apostles and the Working Classes," 513; Walker, "Cradling Mormonism," 29.

⁶Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 150.

⁷See chap. 19 of Evans, *Century of "Mormonism"*; see also Allen and Thorp, "Apostles and the Working Classes," 509–10.

⁸Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 149 and appendix for local origins of emigrants, 248–49.

⁹Grant Underwood, "The Religious Milieu of British Mormonism" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, Oxford, England, 7 July 1987).

¹⁰James B. Allen and Thomas G. Alexander, *Manchester Mormons: The Journal of William Clayton*, vol. 1 of *Classic Mormon Diary Series* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1974), 21.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 22.

¹²Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 146.

¹³*Ibid.*, 151–54.

¹⁴Geraldine P. Mineau, Lee L. Bean, and Mark Skolnik, "Mormon Demographic History II: The Family Life Cycle and Natural Fertility," *Population Studies* 33 (Fall 1979): 432.

¹⁵Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26 (September 1984) 18.

¹⁶See John Heinerman and Anson Shupe, *The Mormon Corporate Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

¹⁷Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹Underwood, "The Religious Milieu," 1.

²⁰Cox, *Churches in a Secular Society*, 7.

²¹*Ibid.*, 8.

²²John Wilson, *Religion in American Society* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 401.

²³Princeton Religious Research Center, *Religion in America* (December 1981): 39.

²⁴Michael Argyle and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Social Psychology of Religion* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 9.

²⁵Cox, *Churches in a Secular Society*, 3.

²⁶John W. Bower and John L. Brooks, *The Victorian Age: Prose, Poetry, and Drama*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1954), 3–11.

²⁷Michael E. Rose, *The English Poor Law: 1780–1930* (New Abbot, England: David and Charles, 1971), 47–48.

²⁸Bower and Brooks, *Victorian Age*, 11.

²⁹Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 119.

³⁰Fraser, *Welfare State*, 119.

³¹John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing: 1815–1970* (New Abbot, England: David and Charles, 1978), 54–58.

³²M. C. Buer, *Health, Wealth and Population in the Early Days of the Industrial Revolution* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), 108–10.

³³Burnett, *History of Housing*, 58–91; Buer, *Health, Wealth and Population*, 226–27.

³⁴Fraser, *Welfare State*, 72.

³⁵Rose, *English Poor Law*, 30–33.

³⁶Sima Lieberman, *Europe and the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1972), 343; Fraser, *Welfare State*, 6–9, 106–7.

³⁷See chap. 5 of Fraser, *Welfare State*.

³⁸See chap. 4 of *ibid.*

³⁹Fraser, *Welfare State*, 79.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 85.

⁴¹Burnett, *History of Housing*, 175–83.

⁴²Fraser, *Welfare State*, 70–71.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 214.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 15–30, 49–50.

⁴⁶*Deseret News 1987 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1986), 256.

⁴⁷These figures are based on members who could be contacted and were willing to respond. They may not be representative of the entire membership or of recent converts. The numbers, however, do reflect members that the Church is able to locate and who will reply to requests for information.

⁴⁸See chap. 19 of Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).

⁴⁹Stark and Bainbridge, *Future of Religion*, 6–9.