

19TH CENTURY MISSIOLOGY OF THE LDS BEDFORDSHIRE CONFERENCE AND ITS INTERRELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

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J. F. C. Harrison noted that one of the more unfortunate impressions sometimes given is that all areas in nineteenth century England were more or less the same – that is, “equally smoky, soulless and horrible to live in. ... This is very misleading. Quite apart from obvious regional differences in traditional culture and economic and social relationships, the impact of population increase was very uneven. ... Virtually all towns did increase between 1831 and 1851, but in some the expansion was relatively modest. ... Too often our impressions of urban growth have derived from an over-concentration on the modern textile towns.”¹ Malcolm Thorp elaborated further: “In most regions ... small scale workshops and handicraft industries were the rule. Also, farming continued to be important in all areas of the country as the largest single employer of labor (even though the percentage of farmers compared to total population was

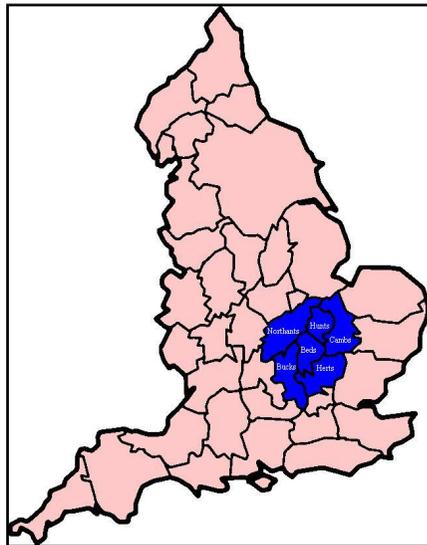


Figure 1. Bedfordshire Conference, 1843–1874, among 19th Century English Counties.

¹ John F. C. Harrison, “The Popular History of Early Victorian Britain: A Mormon Contribution,” in Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm Thorp, eds., *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 15–16.

gradually declining).”²

If there is danger in viewing Victorian Britain as a homogenous social and economic entity, perhaps it is equally unwise to conclude that nineteenth century Mormon missionary work, including interrelationships with other Christian clergy and parishioners in England was similar from region to region. While there were undoubtedly similarities, there were obvious and subtle differences as well, according to local factors. In fact, Andrew Phillips has noted that a closer analysis of local factors from a regional perspective can bring a richness and color that might otherwise be missed. He asserted “the diversity of local circumstances makes it possible to distinguish trends and conditions that do not necessarily correspond to national patterns.”³ It is the thesis of this article that a missiological study of the LDS Bedfordshire Conference and its interrelationship with other members and clergy of other Christian denominations reveals similarities with other regions; however, there are distinct differences which can at least partially be explained by the variance in local factors.

The confines of the Bedfordshire Conference of the LDS British Mission are difficult to quantify. As Richard Poll pointed out, the boundaries of various administrative units in the British Mission were under constant revision.⁴ This was also true of the Bedfordshire Conference. During its nearly 31 year existence (1843–1874), the confines of the Bedfordshire Conference expanded and contracted at least seven times until it was finally dissolved and assimilated into other conferences. One example is the county of Cambridgeshire. This county was included in the Bedfordshire Conference from 1843–1851, and then

² Malcolm Thorp, “The Setting for the Restoration in Britain: Political, Social and Economic Conditions,” as cited in V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, Larry C. Porter, eds., *Truth Will Prevail: the Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987* (Solihull: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 45.

³ Andrew Phillips, “The Essex Conference, 1850–1870,” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 142.

⁴ Richard D. Poll, “The British Mission during the Utah War, 1857–58,” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 225.

divided into its own conference from 1851–1859, only to be assimilated back into the Bedfordshire Conference years later.⁵ Similarly, the Norwich Conference was dissolved and assimilated into the Bedfordshire Conference in 1871, but three years later the Bedfordshire Conference was dissolved, and much of it was included in the newly reorganized Norwich Conference.⁶ Despite these periodic changes the Bedfordshire Conference was generally comprised of the six counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, and Northamptonshire.⁷

A study of the missiology of this conference and its interrelationship with other Christian denominations is unique in two respects. First, the socio-economic make up of these counties was unlike other regions that have been the predominate focus of studies of LDS Church history in early Victorian England. Scholars have asserted that the majority of early British Mormon converts came from the working class who lived in industrialized urban centers.⁸ In contrast, these counties

⁵ See “Organizations and Appointments,” *Millennial Star*, vol. 13, no. 21 (November 1, 1851), 334 and “Minutes of the Special Conference,” *Millennial Star*, vol. 21, no. 6 (February 5, 1859), 95.

⁶ See “Releases, Appointments and Changes in Conferences,” *Millennial Star*, vol. 33, no. 22 (May 30, 1871), 345–346 and “Changes and Appointments,” *Millennial Star*, vol. 36, no. 48 (December 1, 1874), 761.

⁷ For example, see “General Conference,” *Millennial Star*, vol. 5, no. 11 (April 1845), 167, 169 and 173; “Minutes of the Special Conference,” *Millennial Star*, vol. 21, no. 6 (February 5, 1859), 95; “Correspondence,” *Millennial Star*, vol. 23, no. 14 (April 6, 1861), 222; and “A Stroll Through the Bedfordshire Conference,” *Millennial Star*, vol. 32, no. 2 (January 11, 1870), 21.

⁸ James B. Allen and Malcolm Thorp reported that most Mormon converts came from the “working classes of the urban communities.” Cited in “The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Class,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4 (1975), 9.A.M. Taylor noted that the vast majority of converts emigrating from 1850–1862 were from urban centers. He also reported that the country was approximately half urban during this time period, yet 90 percent of Mormon emigrants originated in urban areas. “Moreover, more than two-fifths of that emigration came from towns with more than 50,000 inhabitants.” Cited in Phillip A.M Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburg: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 149. Heaton, Albrecht and

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—a pattern typical of areas where missionary work, convert baptisms, and emigration have been more closely examined. Moreover, John Clarke argues that it would be incorrect to describe rural farm laborers who lived in these counties as ‘working class.’ He notes: “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. It would be more correct to describe the residents of the Bedfordshire Conference during this period as ‘landless laborers’ or ‘the rural poor’ rather than ‘working class.’”⁹

Johnson asserted that the major source of new converts was the population most affected by the “Industrial Revolution and associated rapid population growth, urbanization, and political reform.” They indicated that “proselytizing efforts were more successful in certain industrialized sections,” and that “urban centers of the industrial heartland provided the type of people that were most inclined to join the Church.” Cited in “The Making of the British Saint in Historical Perspective,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Spring 1987), 120–121.

⁹ From private correspondence received December 13, 2007. Professor Clarke is the author of *The Book of Buckingham: A History* (Buckingham, England: Barracuda Books, 1984). As I have noted elsewhere, this was definitely true of Buckinghamshire, see “Patterns of Missionary Work and Emigration in Buckinghamshire, England, 1849–1878,” *BYU Studies*, forthcoming. The neighboring county of Bedfordshire had also scarcely been affected by the industrial revolution, and was almost completely agrarian, with the chief cottage industries being lace-making and straw-plaiting. See Joyce Godbear, *History of Bedfordshire: 1066–1888* (Luton, Bedfordshire: Bedfordshire City Council, 1969), 480. She notes: Bedfordshire experienced the “golden age of the great estates” from 1830–1870. “For their tenant farmers, things went well ... and the political power of nobility and gentry was scarcely undermined,” 465. Northamptonshire was one of two counties in this conference that was included in that region referred to as “The Midlands.” However, while many parts of the North and Midlands had been transformed by the Industrial Revolution, Northamptonshire was almost totally by-passed by it. In fact, the primary industry of shoe-making did not become a factory enterprise until 1890s. At the time the Industrial Revolution was getting under-way in other areas of the midlands, Northamptonshire men were still employed chiefly on the land. See R. L. Greenall, *History of Northamptonshire* (London: Phillimore &

In addition, the success of Mormonism in England during this time period was subject to certain geographic limitations. Stephen Fleming found (see following map¹⁰) that:

The line from the Wash to Bristol (called the Wash-Severn line) that divides Great Britain between its Northwest and Southeast was the dividing line between the Mormons' most and least receptive proselytizing areas in the Anglo world. The apostles added six thousand converts to the Church, and at their departure 98 percent of British Mormons were in the Northwest. In 1844, 93 percent of British Mormons resided in the North and West. ... By 1851 the numbers were less stark, down to 77 percent; however, over seven thousand British Mormons had left for America by 1850, and the numbers suggest that these individuals were overwhelmingly Northwesterners. Thus the percentage of total Northwestern British Mormons in 1851, the year Mormonism reached its peak in Britain, was likely higher than the percentage still remaining in Britain. While the Wash-Severn line presents no absolute dividing line between areas of Mormon success and sub-regional variance certainly occurred, the line does indicate a larger trend in early Mormon British conversions.¹¹

Co. Ltd., 1979), 79–80. Huntingdonshire, also in the Midlands, did not have the fertile soil of other counties in this Conference, but provided wool for the cloth industry instead of becoming an important textile center. See Michael Wickes, *A History of Huntingdonshire* (Chichester, England: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1995), 95–96. In the neighboring county of Cambridgeshire, “general and heavy industry were scarce, even in Cambridge and the larger towns. It was [also] an agricultural county.” See Bruce Galloway, *A History of Cambridgeshire* (Chichester, England: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1983), 93. Lastly, Hertfordshire had various small rural industries, but agriculture remained the major source of employment as it was an important food source with its close proximity to London. See Tony Rook, *A History of Hertfordshire* (Chichester, England: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1984), 100.

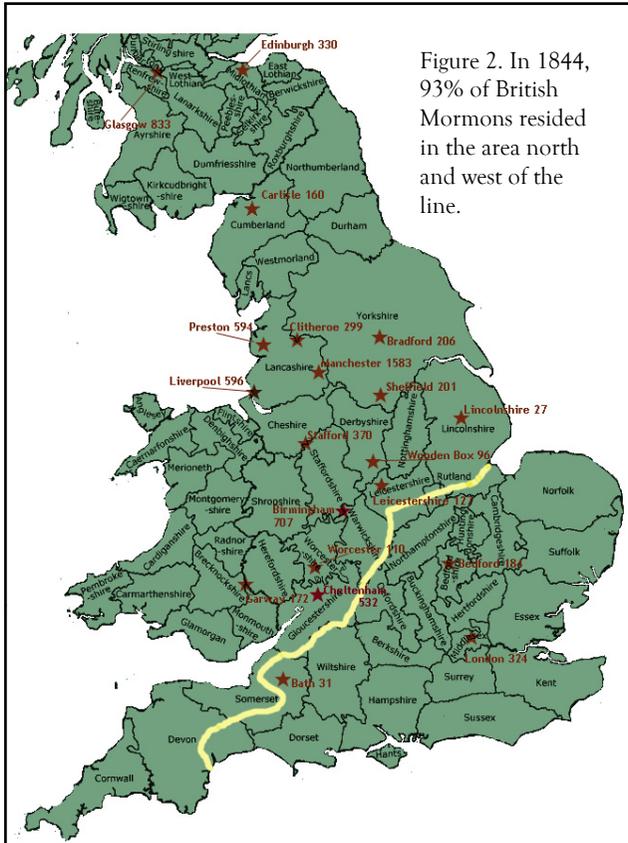
¹⁰ See Stephen J. Fleming, “The Religious Heritage of the British Northwest and the Rise of Mormonism,” *Church History*, vol. 77, no. 1 (March 2008), 85.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

John Gay found a similar geographical demarcation when plotting the success of post-reformation non-conformity.¹² Regardless of where the division may have occurred, these studies provide empirical explanations for the contrasting success and failure Mormonism experienced in these two different geographic regions during the early Victorian period.¹³ The Bedfordshire Conference was in the less-successful south-eastern region by either division.

¹² John Gay examined the expansion of Roman Catholicism and Mormonism as non-conformist movements in England from a geographer's perspective. He found that Roman Catholicism was a predominately north-northwestern phenomenon during the post-reformation period. He attributes this to the fact that the landed gentry had the resources to establish their own churches, and they were farther from London which made it easier to evade the legal penalties associated with non-conformity during that time. Similarly, he found that by 1851, the peak year of Mormon conversions in England, Mormonism was also more successful in the Northern and Western portions of England than in the Southern and Eastern portions. He attributed this to the fact that Mormons were intent on emigration and so tended to gravitate towards sea-port cities of Bristol, Southampton, and Liverpool. See John Gay, "Some Aspects of the Social Geography of Religion in England: The Roman Catholics and the Mormons," in David Martin, ed., *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* (London: SCM Press, 1968), 47-76.

¹³ Gay noted that in 1851 the Mormon movement was still in its infancy in England, and the 1851 Census "must be used with considerable caution when attempting to assess the geographical distribution of Mormons." However, he did indicate that 75% of the members of the Church lived in the Northern and Western regions, excepting London, a figure comparable to the one given by Fleming for the same year (77%). He indicated that although the largest percentage of Mormon converts was from Lancashire, it was not the county with the largest percentage *per capita*. The counties with the highest incidence of Mormon converts per capita were Hampshire, Gloucestershire, and Nottinghamshire. He also gave a list of the "home counties" that were amenable to the Mormon movement, but he excluded Buckinghamshire from that list, based on the raw number of converts and the number of converts per capita. See 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*, 59-61.



Therefore, whether due to the non-industrial and rural nature of the conference itself, or its geographic location, this study proffers a unique perspective to early Victorian LDS Church history. This article will address the following issues relative to this:

1. Who were the missionaries that served in this conference? Did they consist primarily of those sent from America, or were they predominately recent British converts? What was the ratio? How was the call to serve a mission extended differently to American missionaries as opposed to recent British converts?

2. What methods did these missionaries employ in this locale? Did these methods change over time? Did the influence of Protestant or Church of England Clergy affect these practices?
3. What kind of opposition did they encounter, and how did it vary? What were their interactions and relationships with members and ministers of other denominations?

The Missionaries and Their Methods

William Hartley correctly observed that “many of the [British] mission’s conference presidents, branch presidents and missionaries were British Mormons.”¹⁴ This was definitely true of the Bedfordshire Conference. The large majority of missionaries serving in the conference during the years 1843–1874 were English converts.¹⁵ There are several explanations for this. First of all, as early as 1840, Brigham Young had given formal instructions that volunteer full-time missionaries were to be chosen from among those Church members whose circumstances would permit them to devote themselves entirely to the work of the ministry.¹⁶ This continued as policy, and was reaffirmed “in compliance with instructions from the First Presidency... to send the Elders forth” published in the *Millennial Star* in 1857:

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 work; great will be your reward if you do your

¹⁴ William G. Hartley, “LDS Pastors and Pastorates, 1852-55” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 200. He also notes that they were likely to emigrate. To replace them and to train and supervise their successors presented a formidable challenge.

¹⁵ Although it is not always possible to extract from extant data the nativity of those who served as missionaries, an exhaustive inquiry into this question produced the following results: of the 203 missionaries that served in the Bedfordshire Conference during its existence, only 21 can positively be identified as American natives, meaning approximately 10 % were Americans and 90% were of British nativity.

¹⁶ See “Minutes of General Conference,” *Millennial Star* (July 1840), 70.

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. Let the Elders do something that will entitle them to a glorious resurrection at the coming of the Son of Man, which draweth nigh.¹⁷

“Hence,” James B. Allen and Malcolm Thorp noted, “the number of missionaries was greatly expanded and most new baptisms were performed by these local missionaries.”¹⁸ Ronald Walker observed that “The American Missionaries might take the lead, but duly ordained English converts carried the ministerial load. This 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.”¹⁹ Such was the case with Thomas Squires. After preaching for the Wesleyan Methodist for many years (from age 15) and then later for the Baptists, he became dissatisfied with them all and began preaching what he considered an ‘improved doctrine.’ When he came in contact with the Mormon Elders and was baptized, the following occurred: “While the Elders were confirming him, and before taking off their hands, [they] ordained him an elder”²⁰ and he immediately began preaching the gos-

¹⁷ “General Instructions to Pastors, Presidents and Elders,” *Millennial Star* (April 11, 1857), 232–33.

¹⁸ James B. Allen and Malcolm Thorp, “The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–1841: Mormon Apostles and the Working Class,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4 (Summer 1975), 15.

¹⁹ Ronald W. Walker, “Cradling Mormonism: The Rise of the Gospel in Early Victorian England,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Winter 1987), 25–36.

²⁰ In John Paternoster Squires, *Notes of interest to the descendents of Thomas Squires* (Salt Lake City: Eva Beatrice Squires Poleman, 1970), 139.

pel. He served in two branch presidencies,²¹ before “forsaking all” and serving as a traveling full-time missionary.²²

Unlike the American missionaries who were typically called by a member of the First Presidency during General Conference, it was the responsibility of the Pastors²³ and Conference Presidents serving as missionaries in England to call recent converts to full-time missionary service.²⁴ John Spiers recorded in his journal in September 1840: “Elder Thomas Kington (who had been appointed 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 had been counseled, I arranged my business as fast as I could and prepared to go out.”²⁵

Hartley noted an additional reason for the predominance of English missionaries: Utah simply could not supply enough.²⁶ By 1857, when the American missionaries were called home incident to the Utah War, there were only 88 serving in the British Isles,²⁷ spread over more than 30 conferences and almost 700 branches. No missionaries were sent to the British Mission from America in 1858 and only 18 in 1859. This led to the increased calling of more local missionaries. By 1874,

²¹ Robert Hodgert, *Journal of Robert Hodgert*, BX 8670.1 .H664h, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

²² Squires, Notes of interest to the descendents of Thomas Squires, 139.

²³ “Pastor” refers to an administrative office held by a full-time missionary in the British Mission who supervised several conferences and reported directly to the Mission President.

²⁴ “General Instructions to Pastors, Presidents and Elders,” *Millennial Star* (April 11, 1857), 232–33.

²⁵ John Spiers, *Reminiscences and Journal, 1840–1877*, MS 1725, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

²⁶ Hartley, “LDS Pastors and Pastorates, 1852–55” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 201.

²⁷ Poll, “The British Mission During the Utah War,” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 231.

the year the Bedfordshire Conference was dissolved, there were only 12 American Nationals serving as missionaries in all of England.²⁸

Perhaps the most interesting fact relative to those missionaries who were sent from America, as Richard L. Jensen has observed, was that a significant portion were native Englishmen who were sent back to their mother country after their initial immigration.²⁹ Poll reported that while the “the mission president, almost all pastors, and some conference and district presidents were from the United states... Most district presidents and branch presidents were locals.”³⁰ However, Hartley countered that while this may have be true, of the thirty-six pastors called to supervise the fifty conferences and 700 branches between the years of 1852–1855, *all* were British natives—thirty-five of the thirty-six were referred as “American Missionaries” because they were returning from America, having previously emigrated. He suggests that it was apparently thought that a period of residence in Utah provided the advantage of a more thorough initiation into church doctrine and practice. After this preparation, these convert immigrants were seen as invaluable assets to the missionary efforts in their mother country, and were called upon to return.³¹ For example, Job Smith joined the church as a young man in England before emigrating to Nauvoo in 1843. During the October 1849 general conference he was called to return to England just one year after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley. He served

²⁸ Richard O. Cowan, “Church Growth in England, 1841–1914,” *Truth will prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987*, 216–17.

²⁹ See Richard L. Jensen, “Without Purse or Scrip?: Financing Latter-day Saint Missionary Work in Europe in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 12 (1985), 4.

³⁰ Poll, “The British Mission During the Utah War,” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 226.

³¹ Hartley, “LDS Pastors and Pastorates, 1852–55” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 196.

his entire mission in the Bedfordshire Conference, first as a traveling elder and then as conference president.³²

The majority of full-time missionaries initially served as traveling elders. James Henry Linford wrote the following while serving as a traveling elder in the Bedfordshire Conference: “The duty of the traveling elder was to look after the saints in his district, collect the tithing, and the individual emigration account, also to collect money for the book agents.”³³ The title “traveling elder” was quite self-descriptive, perhaps even more so for elders serving in this Conference. William Bramall’s journal accounts of his travels are representative. During the four-month period of November 1860 through February 1861, he visited fifty-six separate locations in the Bedfordshire Conference. He traveled to forty-seven on foot and only nine by train, walking over 400 miles.³⁴ Robert W. Heyborne later recorded: “During my stay in the Bedfordshire Conference I have walked, while visiting the Saints from village to village, 1,207 miles.”³⁵ This highlights a distinguishing characteristic of missionary work in this conference, and provides a possible explanation from some of the unique aspects of how missionary was conducted there.

Thorough analyses of the extant journals of the missionaries and members who served and lived in the Bedfordshire Conference indicate that the full-time missionaries’ time was almost completely devoted to traveling across the broad expanse of their assigned district or the entire conference. Because of this, their primary contacts with “strangers,” the terminology they universally used in reference to those

³² Job Smith, *Diary and Autobiography, 1849–1877*, MSS 881, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 47–48, 74.

³³ James Henry Linford, *An Autobiography of James Henry Linford, Sr., Patriarch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of Kaysville, Utah* (Logan, Utah: J.P. Smith and Sons, Printers, 1947), 22–23.

³⁴ Marie Bramall Boren, *The Pride of Plumbley: A History of William Bramall (1824–1907)*, comp. by Marie Bramall Boren and George and Norma Sumsion Horton (Roy, Utah: M.B. Boren, 1998), 109–116.

³⁵ “Correspondence,” *Millennial Star* (May 5, 1874), 283.

who were not members of the church, was in the member's homes during those visits. In addition to this practice, missionaries would periodically attempt to hire out a town hall or other building in order to teach larger groups of people when resources permitted. Thomas Owen King asked the members in Northampton to take up a collection so they could hire a room in order to attract large groups of "strangers" to teach.³⁶ Job Smith recorded that he was able to obtain the use of a hall, and sent bills around telling the people that "Elder Job Smith of Great Salt Lake would deliver a course of lectures on successive Sunday afternoons." 300 people came.³⁷ Both Job Smith and Charles Dana mention hiring the town crier to announce these public meetings.³⁸ However, because of their travel schedule and limited financial resources, full-time missionaries were often unable to do this type of missionary work. To offset this, they mobilized the efforts of the local membership to preach at nights or on weekends in outdoor meetings, usually in the spring, as weather permitted.³⁹ John Spiers 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, take tracts with them and by all summer to establish the gospel in those villages."⁴⁰

It is also evident from journals that many new members perceived that sharing the gospel was part of their divinely appointed duty. Poll asserts that "most conversions occurred among the relatives and

³⁶ Thomas Owen King, *Thomas Owen King Jr. Journal Transcripts (105-162) 1863*, 125. Unpublished journal held in possession of Leonard Reed, Cambridgeshire, England. This entry is Aug. 16, 1863.

³⁷ Job Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 129.

³⁸ See Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, 147-149 and Hartley, "LDS Pastors and Pastorates, 1852-55" in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 201.

³⁹ Poll, "The British Mission During the Utah War," in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 228.

⁴⁰ Spiers, *Reminiscences and Journal, 1840-1877*.

friends of active members.”⁴¹ 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.”⁴² Samuel was an influential middle class Methodist. In contrast, most of the Mormon converts, like George Coleman, were poor people. Samuel wrote: “It is true ... it was quite a test ... to give up my respectable Methodist folk with their fine [new] meetinghouse, to go with the very poor, despised Mormons ... [who] met in a little old stable fitted up.” His baptism and subsequent association with the poor farm labor-class Mormons created no small stir in his community.⁴³ When Samuel was ordained a priest, like Brother Coleman and “so many Mormon converts before him,” he felt that “ordination to the priesthood was a call to preach and proselyte.”⁴⁴ “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 meeting house. We baptized him and his family and many others,” he noted in his journal.⁴⁵

Those men ordained to the priesthood were not the only ones who felt compelled to share the gospel informally with their 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 the full-time missionaries and thoroughly investigating the church, Hannah eventually joined, emigrated to Utah. This was particularly difficult for Hannah, whose husband was a wealthy tenant farmer, and had associations with the Church of England, and consequently the upper-class in that area. After arriving in Utah, she was

⁴¹ Poll, “The British Mission During the Utah War,” in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 228.

⁴² George Samuel Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge: Pioneering the outposts of Zion* (Logan, Utah: S.G. Ellsworth, 1987), 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9–13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

asked to send her oldest son, Thomas Owen King, back to England, where he served as the president of the Bedfordshire Conference.

Interrelationship with other Christian Denominations

As these LDS missionaries traveled from house to house through these rural counties, visiting the individual homes of members, their interaction with those of other Christian denominations was seemingly infrequent or insignificant to them, based on their journal entries. William Bramall, for example, failed to note a single encounter with anyone of any other Christian denomination in his daily log that spans ten months.⁴⁶ Thomas Owen King's daily record included only two encounters in thirteen month's time. Interestingly, neither of those encounters were polemic. Thomas spent one evening "at Mrs. Nash's to have some talk with [her son] on our principles. He is to be a clergyman in the Church of England. He was quite willing to hear but even when he had to give in he would have two or three ways of interpreting the Scriptures. However, I believe we parted well pleased with each other and with honest feelings."⁴⁷ The other encounter he mentions was with a clergyman and also ended in a relatively civil manner. He wrote that he met with "a Mr. Towel, [who] tried to prove from the bible that the Book of Mormon was wrong." He tried to "keep him on the principles of the Gospel but could not, however, we parted in good feeling neither having gained their point."⁴⁸ Another example of amiable relations with Christian Clergy occurred while Thomas Day was serving in Northamptonshire: "I preached in a Baptist chapel once a week for three months ... I was treated well generally, but no one embraced the gospel. When about to leave I told the people that I would leave them now in the hands of God and to go to pastures where the people would obey the call of the gospel. At parting a Deacon asked me not to shake the dust

⁴⁶ Boren, *The Pride of Plumbley: A History of William Bramall (1824-1907)*, 103-116.

⁴⁷ King, Thomas Owen King Jr. *Journal Transcripts (105-162) 1863*, 150. This entry is January 19, 1864.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 157. This entry is April 23, 1864.

off my feet against him. I told him I would not do that for the kindness he had shown me.”⁴⁹

However, some of the encounters missionaries had with Christian clergy turned hostile. Job Smith recorded “opposition from Methodists” who, one week after disturbing their meetings, actually came to break up a party the saints were having.⁵⁰ He recorded that opposition was so great in some areas that he was unable to preach: “Tried to preach at Bishop’s Stortford, but could not because of opposition”⁵¹ and he later noted, “Tried to preach at Ivinghoe but experienced opposition from a drunken man it was supposed was sent by the priest. The priest came the week before, but sent a messenger this time.”⁵² William Budge recorded that Cambridge was completely under the influence of “the clergy” which made it a “tough place to preach.”⁵³

In many personal accounts the missionaries depict themselves as the victors of these heated exchanges. James Henry Linford wrote in September 1857: “I went to Upwood ... this was a grand field day with the Primitive Methodists. I was opposed by five of their preachers; one of their number was the Mr. Poole who had held a meeting with Elder James H. Flanagan at Gravely some years before. When I quit speaking and closed the meeting Mr. Poole tried to talk but the people would not stop to listen to him.”⁵⁴ Robert Hodgerts recorded: “We traveled all over the Bedford Conference and had quite a good time for five or six weeks. ... For the past few months the work of God increased in numbers rapidly; a goodly number were baptized; considerable opposition made against the truth, principally by the Methodists. Mr. Twelvetrees

⁴⁹ Thomas Day, *The Journals and Letters of Elder Thomas Day, 1814–1894*, comp. and ed. Clifford L. Stott and Ronald D. Dennis, BX 8670.1 .D333s, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, 4.

⁵⁰ Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, 116-117.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵³ Budge, *The Life of William Budge* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1915), 36.

⁵⁴ Linford, *An Autobiography of James Henry Linford, Sr., Patriarch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of Kaysville, Utah*, 23.

of Dunstable published two tracts against Mormonism which militated very much against himself insomuch that he had to leave for London. We, however, continued baptizing every week.”⁵⁵

On the other hand, other accounts vindicated the clergymen in their debates with the LDS missionaries. Reverend F. B. Ashley, Vicar of Wooburn, wrote:

The Mormonites were very active long before I came, in the neighborhood and in the parish, and at that time a priest used to preach on Sundays for three-quarters of an hour at the sign-post between the Vicarage and the church. ... After the service I gave notice that I would give a lecture on Mormonism in the school-room the following Thursday. It caused great excitement ... I sallied out on Thursday evening, and found the road and the room blocked with people. A mill-owner who was amongst them came to me and offered his Sol-room, which was perfectly empty, and would hold a great number standing. ... By the time I got to the Sol-room it was ... crammed to the door. With difficulty a small table and a cask to put on it got inside. I then mounted, and kept them listening for two hours. The quiet was intense, and I could hear nothing but now and then a gasp of sensation and the scratching of the Mormon reporters' pens.⁵⁶

Reverend Ashley's anti-Mormon lectures were published⁵⁷ and multiple editions circulated.⁵⁸ His arguments corresponded closely with

⁵⁵ Hodgert, *Journal of Robert Hodgert*.

⁵⁶ Cited in Francis Busteed Ashley, *Pen and Pencil Sketches - a retrospect of nearly Eighty Years, including about twelve in the artillery and Fifty in the Ministry of the Church of England by Nemo [i.e. Francis Busteed Ashley]* (London: Nisbet, 1889), 158–160.

⁵⁷ Francis Busteed Ashley, *Mormonism: an exposure of the impositions adopted by the sect called "The Latter-day Saints"* (London: J. Hatchard, 1851).

⁵⁸ His pamphlet, *Mormonism: An exposure of the impositions adopted by the sect called "The Latter-day Saints"* sought to clarify and expose his views on the prophet-leader Joseph Smith, the "Golden Plates" from which the "Book of Mormon" was purportedly translated, and other "Mormon Doctrines" and "Mormon Attractions." His arguments corresponded closely with other con-

other contemporary anti-Mormon tracts published throughout the Bedfordshire Conference.⁵⁹ These pamphlets all discredited the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, and other points of doctrine, including the plurality of wives. These tracts had an occasional dramatic effect on some of the new converts, however, it was rarely a lasting effect. For example, Hannah King wrote: “Christmas day, 1850. Gave all the men a Christmas dinner. I stayed to help cook it. My mind very much broken up and agitated by Mrs. Hawthorn coming and telling me what a fearful people the Mormons were... Others, too, were always sending me some horrible thing to read... Christmas day my torture had reached its climax, it was all I could do to go into the kitchen and ask the men if they had enjoyed their dinner as was my want. I felt I was changed and as white as death. If I put food into my mouth I often could not swallow it. It seemed to choke me.”⁶⁰ As much as these pamphlets affected King personally at the time, they did not affect her eventual decision to join the church and emigrate.

Some converts indicated that the words and actions of the Christian clergymen actually helped cultivate in them an interest in Mormonism. Unlike the typical Christian clergymen, Mormon preachers were poor⁶¹ and humble, which endeared them to the poorer laboring class, who as a group had become disenchanted with the formality and exclusivity of the middle and upper-class conformists and even the increasingly middle-class non-conformist movements. Samuel

temporary anti-Mormon tracts published throughout England. See Ashley, *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, 160.

⁵⁹ See Cambridge Clergyman, *Mormonism or the Bible: A Question for our Times* (Cambridge, UK: T. Dixon, 1852); Reverend Robert Clarke, *Mormonism Unmasked, or The Latter-day Saints in a Fix* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1850?); and Reverend John Frere, *A Short History of the Mormonites, or Latter-day Saints: with an Account of the Real Origin of the Book of Mormon* (London: J. Master, 1850).

⁶⁰ Leonard Reed, *Cambridgeshire Saints: A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the County of Cambridgeshire* (Cambridge, UK: Leonard Reed, 2001), 144–145.

⁶¹ Jensen, “Without Purse or Scrip?: Financing Latter-day Saint Missionary Work in Europe in the Nineteenth Century,” 3–14.

Wagstaff and his wife, for instance, were “very happy ... perfectly satisfied with their little world” until the sudden death of his father. “This shock caused serious thought about things spiritual, which sent him back to the Old Church, but with no satisfaction.” Hearing about the Methodists, he drifted over to them, but their continual call for money made him feel that money was all they preached for. Then a fine gentleman came to their place and organized the Calvinists, and he went there until their minister was offered more salary in Manchester ... The little flock felt very badly in losing him ... the large flock he had gathered scattered like sheep without a shepherd. He went looking for another church of the same denomination but their preacher wanted more money and undertook to raise the pew rent on the poor, and said: “The rich can give what they want but if the poor won’t pay for their seats they will have to bring a stool and sit in the aisle,” which again caused the feelings that religion must be for money, causing him to drift away again. In 1849 Samuel’s brother joined the Latter-day Saints. And when Samuel eventually came in contact with the gospel through a tract he received 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. While the various Christian Clergy did not lead Samuel to Mormonism, he was more open to its message because of becoming disenchanted with them. An important side-note is how effective the tracts distributed by the LDS missionaries and members were, as demonstrated by the key role they played in the conversion of Samuel and others mentioned previously.

Sometimes the tension between Christian clergy and Mormonism even occurred within families. Benjamin Johnson joined the LDS Church against the wishes of his father, who was a Baptist minister. Immediately following his conversion, Benjamin constructed on a chapel for the Eaton Bray Branch, of which he was appointed president by the missionaries. He had a beautiful singing voice and would sing so loudly that his father’s parishioners could hear him in the Baptist chapel nearby. Shortly after Benjamin’s conversion his father became

ill, and eventually died, blaming his illness on the broken heart inflicted on him by the disgrace of his son's conversion to the Mormonites.⁶²

Conclusion

A large portion of the missionaries who served in the Bedfordshire Conference were native Englishmen; some of them were even converts from within that conference. The travel requirements of their assignment caused in part by the rural nature of the counties that comprised the conference did not provide the opportunity for frequent association with Christian clergy or parishioners from other denominations. Nor would such association have been generally welcomed, given their poor rural farm laborer status and their almost exclusive association with those of the same social standing. As a result, the LDS missionaries' recorded interactions with Christian clergymen are sparse, and did not comprise a significant component of their missionary labors. Therefore, the proselyting practices of these missionaries appear to have been relatively unaffected by their interactions with members of other Christian denominations or their clergy. However, some encounters did occur, ranging from amiable to antagonistic. The effects of these interactions on the proselytizing efforts of the missionaries were varied. At times the opposition from Christian clergy was so intense it kept the missionaries from preaching; at other times the missionaries perceived these negative interactions as actually aiding their efforts by drawing negative attention away from themselves and towards their antagonists. However, none of these interactions appear to have had a negative effect on the convictions of the poor people they labored with or the missionaries themselves. Evidence suggests that if there was an effect on proselytes or the missionaries, it was positive, in that it solidified their respective positions.

⁶² Wayne Rollins Hansen, *William, Benjamin and Joseph Thomas Johnson, 3 June 1774-9 Oct. 1934*, (Centerville, Utah: W. R. Hansen, 1993), call no. 929.273 J63hw, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, 18-19.