WHY DID BRITISH MORMONS EMIGRATE

By PHILIP A. M. TAYLOR*

CONFRONTED by a movement of emigrants who claim to have been actuated by religious motives, the modern scholar, not himself a member of the sect involved, almost is irresistibly tempted to try to get behind what he regards as appearances and to find the "real," by which he usually will mean the social and economic, basis of action. It should be stated firmly that such a scholar, intent on undermining the view which the participants had of their own activities, must admit that the burden of proof lies upon him. Further, such proof must consist of something more than a series of assumptions about human nature. Very probably, no evidence as to the motives of ordinary people living a hundred years ago can be entirely conclusive. But since the Mormons were to a remarkable degree conscious of their own historical importance, and therefore much addicted to the keeping of records, it is reasonable to hope that such evidence will be unusually abundant for the Mormon emigration. It will be scrutinised not with a determination to reach striking conclusions, but rather with a view to finding the limits within which any conclusions can be reached. It is perhaps fitting that the evidence should be examined by a scholar whose principal interests are in political and economic history, who has been unable to accept the religious claims of Mormonism, but who has devoted a large proportion of the past six years to the study of the first thirty years of the Mormon emigration from Great Britain.

Mormon missionary work in Britain began in 1837, and emigration three years later. Up to 1870, when it first became possible to travel all the way from Britain to Utah by steam

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power, it seems that some 38,000 British emigrants made the journey in Mormon companies, and to these should be added 13,000 Continental emigrants, most of whom travelled through Britain and came within the scope of the same Church organisation. While no set of generalisations can perfectly characterise a thirty-year period, it may fairly be asserted that the Mormons began their work in Britain at a time of acute economic difficulties for the working classes, and of grave social discontent. It remains to be seen whether the Mormon Church consciously utilised this in its emigration propaganda, and why it was that the emigration continued during the period of greater general prosperity which began about 1850. But in such an age it is possible to suggest that many people would have been peculiarly receptive to new doctrine, especially if it combined spiritual and material elements. Moreover much religious discontent coincided with the social grievances. It was widely felt that the Church of England and even the principal sects were spending more energy in denominational disputes, or in internal conflicts over doctrine and organisation, than in meeting those problems of urban living which were emerging on an unprecedented scale.

To those who felt these complex discontents, or even to those who "wandered from Church to Church to find one whose doctrines were more in harmony with the scriptures,"[1] Mormonism could make a powerful appeal. It offered the warmth of revivalism with a much more coherent intellectual content. It offered the authority of sacred books, supplemented by continuous revelation through a living prophet and an authoritative priesthood. It offered the priesthood to all male believers, but within the framework of an elaborate hierarchy. It denounced the corruptions of existing denominations, but its own claim to purity and infallibility was in no sense otherworldly, for it offered a precise geographical location of the Kingdom of God on earth, and a plan for a millennial society.[2] For whatever combination of reasons, membership of the Church in Britain, already 7,500 in 1842, rose

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[1] "Autobiography of Joseph Orton" (a Mormon convert), 2-3, Ms., WPA Collection, Utah State Historical Society.

[2] These features are noted in the British Census of Religious Denominations, Parliamentary Papers 1852-53, LXXXIX, pp. cxi-cxii; *Atheneum* (London), April 3, 1841, quoted in Fawn Brodie. *No Man Knows My History*

rapidly, and although a few years later a decline set in, the peak figure, reached in 1851, was little less than 33,000. Such converts accepted a body of doctrine which included the concept of "gathering" to build up a perfect society, and which regarded as a "mission" even the most material labours to that end.[3]

The problem which faces us is to decide the nature of the relationship between social and other discontents, conversion and emigration. At the risk of over-simplification, it may be suggested that four hypotheses may be put forward, and to some extent were put forward even while large-scale Mormon emigration was going on.

The official version may be seen in the following quotation:

> They gather to fulfil the Scriptures, which abound with predictions that speak emphatically of a gathering in the last days. They gather to build up the Zion of the last days, which the Prophets have predicted will be a literal city. They gather to rear a Temple unto the Lord . . . . They gather to more fully keep the commandments of the Lord than they can here in Babylon . . . . They gather that they may be near to where the Prophets and Apostles of God reside; where they can hear the word of the Lord unsullied and pure . . . . They gather that they may be able to bring up their children as the Lord would have them brought up . . . .[4]

Behind this lay the view, expressed in scores of articles and no doubt thousands of sermons, that the world, "Babylon," was doomed by God's judgment, and that the remnant who had seen the truth must escape to "Zion" to build a society based on divine principles.

(New York, 1945), 264-65; *Edinburgh Review*, XCIC (April, 1854), 370-80; Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City* (2 vols., London, 1861), II, 225.

[3] Thus Brigham Young stated, "There is neither man nor woman in this Church who is not on a mission." *Journal of Discourses* (26 vols., Liverpool, 1854-86), XII, 19. See also the report from Las Vegas of the calling of missionaries in 1855, "some to preach the Gospel in the United States and foreign lands, and others to locate new settlements," as quoted in Milton R. Hunter, *Brigham Young the Colonizer* (Salt Lake City, 1940), 61. Very similar is the report from Harmony Ward in 1863, when teamsters were "sustained by vote to make the trip, and were formally blessed and set apart for their mission." *Improvement Era*, XLV (August, 1942), 540.

[4] *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, XXIV (August 9, 1862), 509.

The contrary view, also expressed at the time, was that the emigrants' motives were largely or mainly economic. One contemporary asserted:

> The Mormon missionaries address the cupidity, as well as the hopes and fears, of those they address . . . . If the listener is not a man of wealth, he will be told that the command is to gather to the mountains, where the finest land is offered for a few shillings . . . . Glad tidings to such is the command to go to the mountains, where they become lords of the soil.[5]

Rather more sophisticated was the following:

> The time of distress which just preceded the great emigration movement was exactly the time at which the highly coloured picture of peace, comfort and prosperity in a new land, drawn by the Mormonite missionary, would tell most powerfully upon our own people, crushed by low wages and tempted to look upon their own country as a scene of immovable hardship, inequality and oppression . . . . Their arguments were addressed to a mass that was already on the move.[6]

In such an explanation, people became Mormons in order to emigrate in a manner which they considered especially advantageous, escaping thereby from the known hardships and frustrations of the Old World to the dreamed-of opportunities of the New.

Third, it could be argued that, whatever the mixture of motives in conversion, emigration was dominated by certain conditions within the Church, for example by the financial assistance that was offered, in varying forms, during about half of our period.

Last, emigration, after the very first movements, may have continued by a process of "contagion." In other words, early

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[5] J. W. Gunnison, *The Mormons or Latter Day Saints in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Philadelphia, 1856), 143-44.

[6] *Times* (London), June 3, 1857.

[7] A widespread concept in Europe, whatever its exaggerations and the resulting disillusionment. See, for example, Merle Curti and Kendall Birr, "The Immigrant and the American Image in Europe 1860-1914," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXVII (September, 1950).

emigrants may have influenced friends and neighbours to follow them, whether by letters, or other means of spreading news, or simply by an example that could be seen.[8] A contemporary Mormon statement seems to suggest this:

> From the first day that they begin to sell their furniture and goods, the voice of emigration preaches loudly, and the attention of multitudes is attracted to the onward progress of the great work of God.[9]

These hypotheses, while distinct in emphasis, are of course not all mutually exclusive. They will be examined, in part statistically, in part through analysis of the appeals made by the Mormon Church in its emigration propaganda. But the nature of the evidence, and some of the problems of handling it, must first be considered.

The motives of those who emigrated in the nineteenth century will probably, to a considerable extent, remain unknowable. Not only were there several strands, personal and family, economic, political, religious, in each of which there was an element of attraction to a new country and repulsion from an old, but the pattern of such strands may have been different for every individual or head of a family in the entire movement.

Statistical evidence may throw some light on this subject, but it has certain special limitations. It can show no more than the correlation between the final decision to emigrate, or rather its translation into practice, and various other factors. While, for example, it may be possible to plot upon a graph curves of emigration and of business activity, and to detect some striking resemblance between them, nothing is thereby told about the complex background of the actions which the statistics record,

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[8] Such "contagion" is analysed by William F. Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration to the New World from 1815 to the Famine* (New Haven, 1932), 100-02, 126-27, 205-06. See also Theodore C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America 1825-60* (Northfield, Minnesota, 1931), 147-50, 196-213, 239-66; Henry P. Fairchild, *Greek Immigration to the United States* (New Haven, 1911), 87-90; Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *England and America* (2 vols., London, 1833), II, 223-24, considered emigrants' letters so important for the encouragement of colonisation that he proposed free postage within the British Empire.

[9] *Millennial Star*, X (March 1, 1848), 74.

and nothing is proved, though much may be suggested, about any time-lag between decision and action. This is true even when emigration figures reach their twentieth century refinement. For the nineteenth century, when the figures were far more crude, the difficulties are even greater.

The Mormon evidence, which may contribute to the solution of our problems, comes from the following principal sources. In the first place, there are two types of lists of passengers in the emigrant ships. For 86 of the 180 ships used by Mormon emigrants, there are available in the National Archives the official passenger manifests handed by the master to the customs officials at the port of arrival. It is not always possible to be sure that only Mormons travelled in these ships, and after careful scrutiny, 53 manifests were accepted as reliable. Characteristic defects of these documents include a very crude classification of the occupations of emigrants, far too many being recorded simply as "labourers," and the total omission of any data on the emigrants' local origins. Fortunately, the manifests can often be supplemented by the Church Shipping Books, based on reservations of passage made at Liverpool, which, from 1849, are available in the Church Historian's Library at Salt Lake City. These not only increase the size of the samples, but often enable the manifest of a particular ship to be corrected. The three main advantages of this source are that all passengers may safely be assumed to have been members of the Mormon companies, that the records of occupations are very detailed, and that local origins are given. From 1849 to 1862, with 1854 very defective, this information is given down to the level of the smallest villages; after 1862, the growing system of block-bookings involves the grouping of most emigrants under the name of a Conference president, but this enables the Conference, though not the community, of origin to be determined with no more than a small risk of error. The other main sources are the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, containing compilations of statistics, contemporary descriptions, and exhortations, the *Journal of Discourses*, and a great number of diaries.

If the statistical evidence showed that Mormon emigration fluctuated independently of general economic conditions; if it

showed some uniformity of fluctuation within each district or each occupation; if a rather constant ratio existed between membership and emigration within each district; or if each district showed a steady draining away of converts through emigration, then some support would be given to the hypothesis of religious rather than economic motivation, though it could not be proved that one excluded the other. If the evidence revealed that fluctuations within Mormon emigration corresponded to those within emigration in general during the same period, then it would seem likely that economic and social motives predominated; though it should be noted that only total or occupational comparisons could be made, since there is no evidence as to the local origins of British emigration in general during the century. If it could be shown that Mormon emigration fluctuated with financial assistance, and if, further, it could be found that the emigration was concentrated within those groups which received little or no assistance from any other source, then our third hypothesis would be reinforced. Lastly, if detailed maps or other evidence could show that emigration spread from original individuals or districts in some recognisable pattern, then the "contagion" hypothesis would become plausible.

It must be stated at once that this last test cannot be made. With thousands of people, many with common names, relationship could not be traced accurately, and it would be wholly impossible to trace friends, who might have been equally important in the spread of the "contagion." Further, since detailed local figures are missing, as we have seen, in the period before 1849, the first emigration after the original missionary activity simply cannot be known.

The last fact to be stressed is that Mormon emigration was only one part of a larger movement. For men with capital there were attractive opportunities for emigration to the settled districts of the United States, to Canada, or to Australia. For poorer men, especially farm workers and rural craftsmen, the British government provided ample financial assistance to emigrate to Australia. For poor people who were willing to endure hardships, passage in the Canadian timber ships was very cheap, and it was easy to make their way into the United States from the Canadian ports.

But while these counterattractions should be noted, it is quite impossible to measure how far they competed with the Mormon Church in directing the decisions of the discontented within Britain.

The doctrine of gathering, already mentioned, occupied a prominent place in Mormon emigration propaganda. In part, it was set forth through texts, whether from the Bible, the *Book of Mormon*, or the revelations of Joseph Smith embodied in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. One example will suffice:

> Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father, that they shall be gathered into one place upon the face of this land, to purify their hearts, and to be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent to fall upon the wicked; for the hour is nigh, and the day soon at hand, when the earth is ripe; and all the proud, and they that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts.[10]

The fate that was destined to fall upon Babylon was underlined by the sections of *Millennial Star* entitled "Signs of the Times." In every issue there appeared this list of recent disasters. A single article in 1850 noted fire in Venezuela, a gale in the Sandwich Islands, cholera at Havana, explosion at Algiers, and riots in Illinois. Another in 1861 listed the American Civil War, earthquakes, storms and famine in India, deaths of rulers and railway accidents, and concluded: "The year closes gloomily upon the nations of Babylon."[11] The constructive side of gathering was also elaborated. Thus it was shown that in Utah the Saints would be beyond the power of mobs, that they would be able to worship without interference, that they could prepare in peace, safety, and righteousness for the millennuim, for, as the *Book of Mormon* put it:

> And the time cometh, and that speedily, that the righteous must be led up as calves to the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power,

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[10] *Doctrine and Covenants* (first European edition, Liverpool, 1845), Section X, 113.

[11] *Millennial Star*, XII (July 1, 1850), 205-06, XXIII (December 28, 1861), 829-31.

> and great glory. And He gathereth His children from the four quarters of the earth: and He numbereth His sheep, and they know Him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.[12]

From 1854, articles were often entitled "Going Home to Zion," while reports from Utah were often headed "News from Home." By such means it was hoped to convince converts that their natural doubts and fears should be reversed, and that Europe for the true Saint was not home but an exile.

Yet while the religious message was thus emphasised, Mormon emigration propaganda also made an economic appeal. In Nauvoo days, British converts were told of "miles in extent of fine rich land, just ready for the plough."[13] Two years after the arrival of the Mormons in Utah, Parley P. Pratt wrote to his brother Orson:

> Here, too, we are all rich—there is no real poverty, where all men have access to the soil, the pasture, the timber, the water-power, and all the elements of wealth without money or price.[14]

It was implied or stated that wages were good and employment abundant, for, as Orson Pratt told the Manchester General Conference in 1850:

> We have got a nation to raise, cities to build, and temples to erect, and to accomplish great feats; and if you want to do two days' work in one, you can do it.[15]

From time to time, the contrast between American and British conditions, always implied, was stated openly. Thus in 1842, after expatiating upon the "oppression, priestcraft and iniquity" in Britain, and pointing out that at Nauvoo the Saints could enjoy "all the blessings of liberty, peace and plenty," an article declared:

> . . . they hoist the flag of liberty—the ensign of Zion—the stars and stripes of the American Constitution; and

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[12] First Book of Nephi, Chapter VII, 58. (The edition used was the first European edition, Liverpool, 1841.)

[13] *Millennial Star*, III (August, 1842), 76.

[14] *Ibid.*, XI (January 15, 1849), 24.

[15] *Ibid.*, XII (December 1, 1850), 358.

> under its protection they completely and practically *nullify the bread tax.* They eat free bread, free tea, free sugar, free everything.[16]

Other articles contrasted British and American taxation and working conditions.[17] As an example may be quoted an article of 1859, which, after calling attention to the Trade Cycle, asserted that emigration was the means

> . . . by which the down-trodden of the old countries will be redeemed from poverty and from the refined yet cruel slavery of European nations, where the working man is free to starve, and the willing toiler to beg and often to beg in vain for the privilege to toil . . . . Now, one of the designs of the gathering is to emancipate the working man who accepts the restored Gospel, and thus to give him temporal as well as eternal salvation.[18]

In the official printed propaganda there was considerable realism in depicting hardships, though it was of course asserted that the Lord would strengthen His Saints to do His work. It was pointed out that life on board an emigrant ship was uncomfortable, that in Utah many would have to change their occupation, and that although Utah was Zion, yet

> There are persons . . . from different nations, who, although they feel attachment to the cause of truth, have their prejudices of education.[19]

But it is permissible to doubt whether similar realism prevailed in the preaching of missionaries, for in 1861, an official rebuke was delivered:

> They read and sing about Zion as she was seen in visions by the Prophets . . . and do not appear to have any conception that this is not all to be enjoyed now . . . let every Saint remember that Zion is composed of such as he.[20]

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[16] *Ibid.*, II (February, 1842), 153-55. Similarly, Orson Spencer wrote of the new settlement as one "where no ten-hours bill will be needed to mitigate the force of the oppressor's rod." *Ibid.*, XI (January 1, 1849), 4.

[17] *Ibid.*, X (July 15, 1848), 220; XVI (January 14, 1854), 23.

[18] *Ibid.*, XXI (March 26, 1859), 204-06.

[19] *Ibid.*, I (March, 1841), 274, referring to Nauvoo. The Mormon propaganda, however, repeatedly contrasted its emigration organisation with the contemporary practice, and emphatically asserted its superiority on the grounds of morals and discipline. See, for example, *ibid.*, XI (February 15, 1849), 56, and XXI (September 10, 1859), 589-90.

[20] *Ibid.*, XXIII (April 13, 1861), 232-34.

Similarly in 1854:

> The imagination of some Saints has been so exalted by the Elders who preached to them, that they suppose that all our pigs come ready cooked, with knives and forks in them.[21]

The address concluded with the words: "If you want a heaven, go and make it."

The combined evidence of passenger manifests and Church Shipping Books shows that the Mormon emigration was overwhelmingly one of whole families, with an almost equal number of males and females in each age group, a high proportion of children, and an appreciable number of middle-aged and old people.[22] In fact, these features, including even the travelling together of multiple families of middle-aged man and wife, grown-up sons and their wives and children, adolescent boys and girls, and elderly brothers and sisters, all confirm the impression of the New York reporter who wrote:

> We were informed that it is not infrequent for whole families, from the little nursling in the first stages of infant weakness to the oldest member of the generation, to embark on these pilgrimages.[23]

Where our evidence allows the comparison to be made, as for the balance of male and female, Mormon emigration differs markedly from other emigration of the same period, and even more from much of the emigration to the United States late in the century, an emigration of able-bodied men in search of employment and, in intention, only temporary settlers. Whatever else may be said of them, the Mormons were clearly intending permanent settlement. Their reason for desiring this permanence remains our problem.

While nothing can be said of the prosperity of the emigrants, it is found that from 1849 to 1869, in a sample of nearly 8,500 men

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[21] J. M. Grant in *Journal of Discourses,* III (September 24, 1854), 65-67.

[22] Of 19,017 persons, 30.94% were infants and children, and 15.82% were adults over 40. In the age group 15-40, there were 5,005 males and 5,014 females. Omitting one ship because of a defective manifest, 15,112 of 18,791 persons travelled in families, and of these 4,840 were in family groups of more than 5 persons each.

[23] New York *Herald,* May 3, 1860.

whose occupations are specified, there is a high proportion of miners (16.14%) and textile workers (9.45%), and a small proportion of farmers (4.86%). Farm workers are few: only 196, to whom should be added another 150 or 200 who were noted as "labourers" in villages. General labourers constitute 22.27% of the Mormon emigration, a proportion little more than one-third as great as that in all British emigration to the United States; this seems a discrepancy too great to be accounted for by the inaccuracies in the non-Mormon records, glaring though these are. There are a few professional people and shopkeepers, and the balance is made up of great numbers of carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and of representatives of all other occupations.

Mormon emigrants during the period 1850-62, for which the data in the Shipping Books were plotted, came mainly from London, the West Midlands, South Wales, Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire, and Central Scotland. The most important single communities were, in order, London, with 1,301; Merthyr Tydfil, 844; Birmingham, 741; Liverpool, 702; Glasgow, 530; Manchester, 485; Sheffield, 385; and Bristol, 332.[24] The Conference figures for the years 1863 to 1870 suggest a very similar distribution. Of more than 14,000 persons for whom such details are available during 1850-62, 42% came from communities which at the 1851 census had more than 50,000 inhabitants; 32.45% from those with 10,001 to 50,000; 15.60% from those with 2,501 to 10,000; and only 9.95% from districts that could fairly be called rural—all this at a time when the population of Great Britain was about one-half rural.[25] Even in mainly rural counties, it is often found that the few towns provided most of the Mormon emigrants.[26] While very many had to change their occupation after arrival in Utah, Mormon emigrants were, in fact, overwhelmingly

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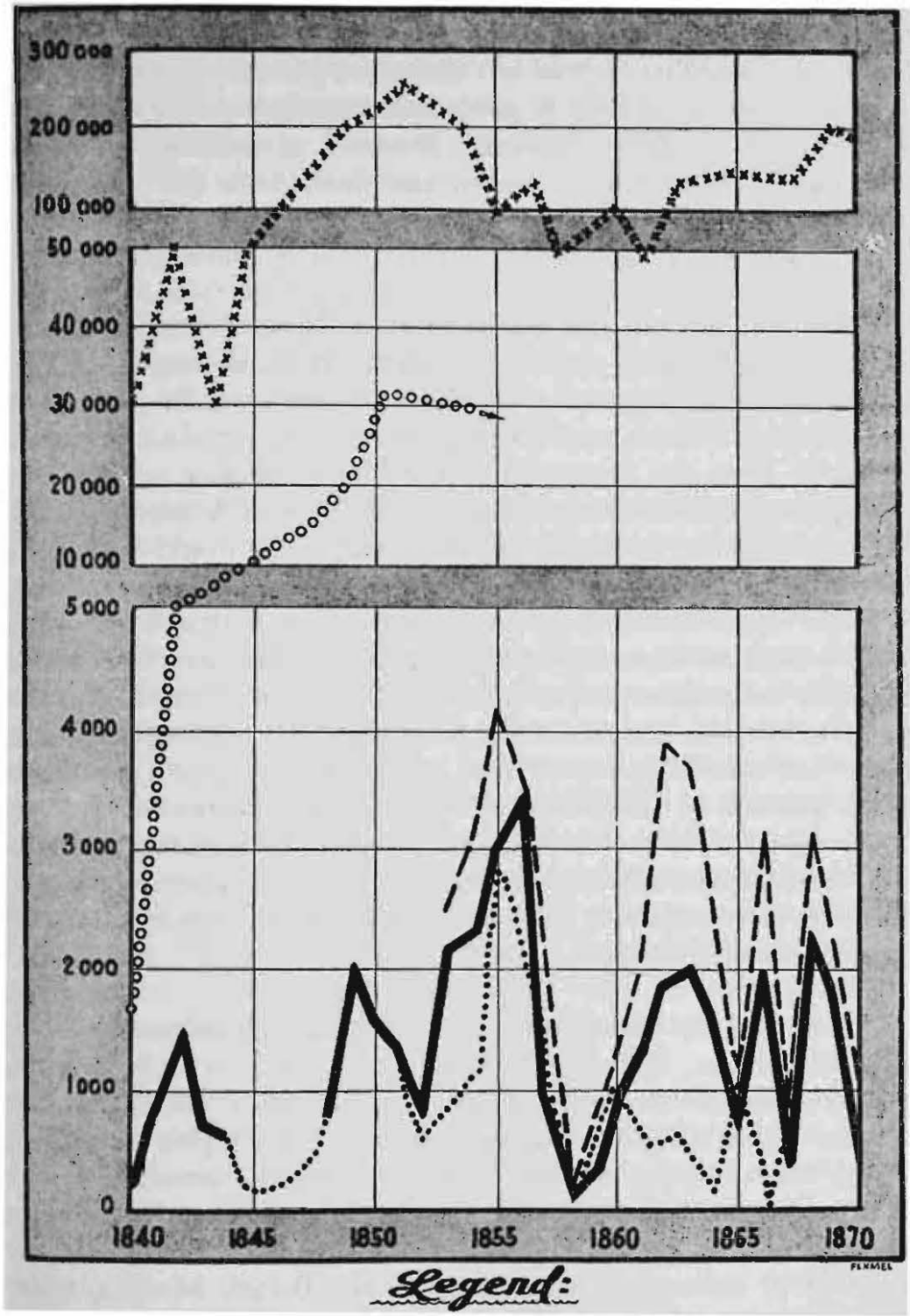
[24] An unknown proportion of the "Liverpool" emigrants were fairly certainly people who gave accommodation addresses when booking passage.

[25] There is a slight urban bias in the statistics, in that some of the smallest communities could not be found on the map; that some were not recognised as separate for the purposes of the 1851 census; and that some people probably transacted their business at a neighboring centre larger than the community in which they really lived, and gave that as their address.

[26] For example, Leicester provided 134 of Leicestershire's 191; Cambridge, 131 of Cambridgeshire's 163; Carlisle, 70 of Cumberland's 82.

MORMON AND OTHER EMIGRATION

~1840-1870~



urban, and were factory workers, miners, artisans and general labourers, with a small group of perhaps 11.5% of "middle class" people. It should be pointed out that these groups were not eligible for the full-scale of British government assistance for emigration to Australia, or New Zealand Company assistance which was governed by the same principles; and these were the only large-scale examples of emigration assistance, other than Mormon, from Britain within our period.

For our purpose, the fluctuations in Mormon emigration are even more interesting than its structure. It is, of course, possible to argue that emigration would be encouraged in periods of depression in Britain, which would cause many people to feel with increased force the attraction of the United States; or that they would be attracted mainly in periods of boom in America, regardless of conditions in Britain; or that emigration would be gravely hampered by depression in Britain, which would eat up the savings of better days. But if there was any economic causation of Mormon emigration, one would at least expect British and Continental Mormon emigration to fluctuate differently, and British Mormon and total British emigration to the United States to fluctuate in somewhat similar fashion. The accompanying graph, based on totals printed in the *Millennial Star* or on computations from figures printed in that journal, shows that such is not the case. It is the Mormon movements that follow similar lines, while both are very different from the general emigration, especially in the second half of the period.

Two further factors have been plotted: the unassisted Mormon emigration, British and Continental combined, because no accurate separation is possible; and Mormon membership in Britain. With all these factors in mind, it is possible to suggest a very tentative explanation of the fluctuations revealed by the graph. The initial boom in membership was followed by a wave of emigration, reaching its peak in 1842. There followed not only a period of incompetence or worse in the British Mission, under the presidency of Reuben Hedlock, but a crisis in the Church in America, following the assassination of Joseph Smith in 1844. With the founding of Salt Lake City, and the Presidency of Orson Pratt in Britain, there was an outburst of constructive

energy, which resulted in a great increase in membership, followed very quickly by large-scale emigration. From the early 1850's, baptism of new members in general failed to keep pace with emigration, death, and excommunication, but the existing membership was drained away by an emigration that remained high. It was interrupted by the Mormon War of 1857, and, in the 1860's, by the cessation of financial assistance which was sometimes necessary. It is possible that the more prosperous emigrants went first, soon after their conversion, and that the poorer and more helpless remained, ever more dependent upon assistance. It should be noted that costs tended to rise, and an elder reported in 1870 that a rise of £2 in the rail fare "had quite a crippling effect upon large families."[27]

Thus far, the statistical evidence suggests that the timing of Mormon emigration was determined by factors within the Church, rather than by general economic factors. But this explanation must be tested far more thoroughly before being accepted. It may be said at once that in general the principal occupations show fluctuations so nearly identical that a graph drawn upon a single scale would be utterly illegible. The exceptions to this are four in number. The "labourers" seem to fluctuate much more violently than other occupations, especially in the 1860's in response to the granting or withholding of financial aid. Miners and textile workers both show a tendency to rise and then stay high during the early 1860's, rather than to follow the general movements. Lastly, the "middle class" of farmers, shopkeepers, professional and clerical workers falls away after 1856, though the smaller numbers continue to follow the general fluctuations.

Isolation of the rural element in Mormon emigration, which is possible for the period 1850-62, produces rather similar results. Farmers, farm workers, labourers, in the villages, shopkeepers, craftsmen, and such industrial workers as weavers and miners, were all counted, and their emigration was found to fluctuate together to a remarkable degree, apart from the shopkeepers, whose number, after 1854, was negligible. No connection was found between the figures and bad harvests, wheat prices, or

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[27] *Millennial Star*, XXXII (August 2, 1870), 492.

enclosures.[28] If one divides England into regions of corn-growing and of mixed farming, into areas of high and low wages, and into areas of high and low poor rates, there is remarkable similarity in the Mormon emigration from each district. Areas of high wages and low poor rates furnished nearly half of all rural emigrants, and more than half of the farmers. Of farm labourers, shepherds, etc., it was found that only 6 of 189 emigrated from counties in which labourers' wages exceeded 12s. a week; 41 from those with 10s. to 11s.; 97 from those with 8s. to 9s.6d.; and 45 from those with under 8s.[29] Taken together, these figures furnish some evidence to support an economic interpretation, but none that can be called conclusive.

Similarly, no striking conclusions emerge from an analysis of figures of the relationship between membership in and emigration from the several Conferences, and of the "shape" of the emigration from each Conference over the whole period. For the period in which these emigration figures are known, that is, from 1849, membership figures are fragmentary, being best for the first five years and virtually useless for most of the 1860's. Taking three years as specimens—1851, 1853, 1854—no very constant ratio could be found. In 1851, emigration totalled about 4% of membership; individual Conference ratios varied widely, though 16 of the 24 were between 0 and 8%. In 1853, the general ratio was about 7%; the individual figures were scattered, though 24 of 28 were from 2% to 10%, and 13 of these were between 4% and 8%. In 1854, the general ratio was 8%; of 26 Conferences, 23 were from 2% to 10%, and of these 11 were between 6% and 10%. As for the figures from each Conference over the whole period, the impression is one of fluctuation rather than of any steady draining away of members. Since study of each district is impracticable, our last type of classification will be that of a few selected areas.

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[28] Wheat prices may be found in William Page, *Commerce and Industry* (2 vols., London, 1919), II, 216-17. The detailed records of enclosures here used were those in Gilbert Slater, *The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of the Common Fields* (London, 1907), 269-313.

[29] The classification follows James Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-51* (2d ed., London, 1852), 474, 480, 514.

Some additional detail can be uncovered by this procedure, but there are strict limits. No close-up view is possible of the more than 700 communities from which Mormon emigrants came between 1850 and 1862. Very often, too, no valid correlations can be stated because numbers are so small: ten emigrants from a village in one year may be a single family, and their departure may be regarded as accidental. The agricultural areas selected are Lincolnshire (with 417 Mormon emigrants, 1850-62) and the combined counties of Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire (with 517). Areas with agriculture and rather old industries are Gloucestershire (675) and Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire combined (673). Areas most deeply affected by the Industrial Revolution are Lancashire (2,250), Glamorgan and Monmouth (1,760), and Central Scotland (1,491). Figures for the years after 1862 have been omitted because of their slightly lower standard of accuracy, but they appear to be similar to those which follow.

Many features of the emigration from these districts in the period 1850-62 are not unexpected. Over 45% of the Lincolnshire emigrants, and nearly 42% of those from the other three rural counties, came from communities with under 2,500 inhabitants at the 1851 census, but under 3% of those from Monmouthshire and Glamorgan and only 2% of those from Lancashire. In each district there is found a great variety of occupations. Those of the greatest importance in Monmouthshire and Glamorgan are miners (slightly more than 50% of all men whose occupations are recorded) and metal workers (over 10%). In Central Scotland the dominant group are miners (nearly 40%), textile workers (nearly 10%), and metal workers (nearly 8%). In Lancashire they are textile workers (more than 30%), metal workers (over 10%), and miners (nearly 10%). In Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, textile workers (nearly 27%) predominate, with nearly 15% of miners. In Gloucestershire, apart from general labourers, only textile workers exceed 10%. With the same exception, in the rural counties farm workers and village labourers make up about 23% of all workers whose occupations are specified.

Thus far it appears that Mormons simply drew their recruits and their emigrants from those occupation groups that dominated each district. But in certain respects, there appears to have been some connection between Mormon emigration and economic conditions. Thus a majority of the textile workers in all districts were weavers—many were probably handloom weavers, but one cannot be sure—or framework-knitters, both depressed classes, and in the early 1860's it was the emigration of these groups that rose most sharply.[30] In Scotland, where many writers have distinguished between the relatively prosperous fancy weavers of Renfrew and the relatively depressed plain weavers of Lanark and Ayr, Mormon emigration of weavers is found to have come almost entirely from the latter districts. Throughout, and especially during the Cotton Famine, the Yorkshire textile workers, chiefly no doubt woollen workers, emigrated in far smaller numbers than the mainly cotton workers of Lancashire, and with none of the latter's striking fluctuations.

Yet when all this has been said, the uniformity in fluctuations is more impressive than any differences. Not only do the totals for the several districts vary rather closely together, but so do the figures of miners in the several areas. Secondly, even when one sees a large and prolonged rise in Mormon emigration in, say, Lancashire during the Cotton Famine of the early 1860's, this may have been due as much to the financial assistance extended during these years by the Church Team system as to any local economic conditions. The figures cannot tell us, but it should be pointed out that a similar rise can be seen in some districts not affected by the Famine. Further, Mormon commentators suggested that the Famine was a deterrent to emigration. Writing in 1862, one of them said: "Many of the Saints have had to use what they had saved to emigrate with to keep them alive."[31] Whether, without the Famine, assistance would have caused Lancashire emigration to rise even more steeply it is, of course, impossible to say.

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[30] The wages of weavers in general were about half of those of spinners. See the table of Manchester wages in Arthur L. Bowley, *Wages in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1900), 119.

[31] *Millennial Star*, XXIV (March 15, 1862), 174.

There must be a certain element of ambiguity in any investigation into the secular or spiritual motives of Mormon emigration. Much evidence could be found to prove that the Mormons recognised no such distinction between these elements which today are often thought of as separate. Thus, Joseph Smith's revelations were of a dual character. The authority of the priesthood comprised both elements. The whole concepts of gathering and of mission included both aspects of life, for any work done in the Lord's service was of eternal value. With a doctrine and propaganda of such a type, it is perfectly possible that the effect upon the minds of converts would not admit of any rigorous distinction between secular and spiritual.

It must be admitted also that even our tentative conclusion about the importance of financial assistance does not enforce a purely economic interpretation. Even for those who travelled in the large and well-organised Mormon companies, the cost of traveling from Britain to Utah was likely to be as high as £15. For a family, this would involve an outlay of as much as £50, at a time when probably few Mormon converts earned more than £50 a year. The Church frowned upon the common contemporary practice of sending one able-bodied male member of a family as a pioneer, to earn money for a later reunion of the family in America. Family unity seemed to the Church of paramount importance, and the figures given earlier suggest that the exhortations in this direction produced decisive results. From time to time, families were encouraged to go to the eastern United States, there to earn enough to enable them to resume their journey to Zion later. But apart from such expedients, emigration was a major financial undertaking, and it is recorded of one Scottish miner that he saved for eleven years before he could cross the Atlantic with his family, and that even then he had to work in Rhode Island before he could complete his journey to Utah.[32] It is not surprising, then, that financial aid should have been so important. But it is essential to note that about one-half of all the British Mormon emigrants went to America without such aid, and this included all emigrants before 1852. One further point

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[32] Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (4 vols., Salt Lake City, 1901-36), III, 766-69.

should perhaps be made. Even with financial aid and a superior form of organisation, it is by no means certain that emigration to Utah would have been more attractive, in purely material terms, than emigration to other fields open at the time. If economic motives had predominated, one would expect a large number of desertions from Mormon companies, when people realised the hardships that lay ahead in the American West, and when Mormon aid had already brought them to the settled districts of the United States. Accuracy of figures for such a phenomenon is not to be expected, and Mormon sources might well be reticent on such a subject. But one must record that there is extraordinarily little evidence of desertion.[33]

Even if no very clear picture has emerged of correlation with general economic conditions, it is still remarkable how concentrated, in area and occupations, was the Mormon emigration. It is impossible to know the occupations of the membership, as distinct from that proportion who emigrated. But it seems certain that urban and industrial elements predominated. It is therefore permissible to consider whether economic and social conditions played any part in the receptiveness of British workers, many thousands in number, to the Mormon appeal. The discontents of the time may have made men more ready to accept any clear and confident doctrine. But there is in Mormon sources some evidence that a more precise connection was sometimes recognised. It was in fact sometimes suggested that people joined the Church with emigration rather prominently in mind. Thus in 1869, a report from the Glamorgan Conference stated:

> We are baptising a few here and there, and expect to baptise quite a number by emigration time, many of whom are in comfortable circumstances, and intend to join the Church, sell off, and emigrate.[34]

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[33] In 1853 it was reported that one hundred emigrants had remained in the eastern United States, "some to apostatise and some to go on another season." *Millennial Star*, XV (September 3, 1853), 586. In 1856 one writer estimated that "from five to fifty in a company of three hundred" usually deserted before the journey across the plains. *Ibid.*, XVIII (October 4, 1856), 637; *ibid.*, IV (February, 1844), 147, records 30 desertions at St. Louis in 1841, but this is very imperfect evidence.

[34] *Ibid.*, XXXI (February 27, 1869), 149.

More directly, Brigham Young wrote to Franklin D. Richards in 1855:

> Be wary of assisting any of those who come into the Church now, during these troublous times for Britain, whose chief aim and intention may be to get to America.[35]

Similarly in 1868 a speech made at the London Conference included these words:

> There was a great excitement among the people here on the subject of emigration, and he hoped none would join the Church solely for the purpose of being emigrated.[36]

The remainder of the evidence here presented leaves us in doubt as to the importance of such motives over the entire movement. But whether emigration as such had been the prime concern, or whether emigration was simply a consequence of conversion in the sense that it was part of the duty of a Saint, the emigrants seem to have behaved in a rather uniform way once their decision had been taken. In the 1840's, before financial aid was offered by the Church, the timing of the emigration seems to have reached its closest relationship with economic conditions in Britain. Then, when the more prosperous converts had perhaps emigrated, those who remained became increasingly dependent upon financial assistance, which accordingly dominates the timing of the movement. In both periods, however, crises in the Church of a non-economic character could also be decisive.

Our results are therefore inconclusive—and for any other emigration in the nineteenth century they would be even more so. But prolonged study of Mormonism and Mormon emigration seems to permit one further comment. The thirty-year period here studied was not one of perfect rationality or universal scepticism—if indeed there has ever been such an age—and there is nothing inherently improbable in the acceptance of Mormon teaching by many British people of the working and lower-middle

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[35] *Ibid.*, XVII (December 22, 1855), 814-15.

[36] *Ibid.*, XXX (May 2, 1868), 277. One individual example may be added. Edward Tullidge, in his *History of Salt Lake City* (Salt Lake City, 1886), Biographical Section, states that Matthew Walker lost his money in railway speculation in England in 1847. "In this adversity he was converted to Mormonism, and emigrated."

classes, who may have craved spiritual assurance at least as much as material betterment. Yet when converted—and they all joined the Church before their emigration—emigration could be presented to their minds as a duty. What they did, however arduous, could be presented to them as the Lord's work, and their struggles were written and preached about as part of the heroic history of a Church that was peculiarly self-conscious about its history. In other words, it is perfectly possible—even if the conclusion is distasteful to many moderns—that more than a few rose above the purely material conditions of their day. One newspaper commented:

> It was a sort of half religious, half worldly dream, which led them out in quest of a sort of earthly paradise, where, under a theocratic rule, peace, plenty and comfort reigned without interruption or decay.[37]

Many British converts may have had this vision, and, looking to a country which the eloquence of preachers assured them, in the familiar language of scripture, was the citadel of the Lord, "felt that this was not their home, and their eyes and expectations were westward."[38]

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[37] *Times,* June 3, 1857.

[38] *Millennial Star,* XXIII (March 2, 1861), 141. In the original the passage is in the present tense.