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Smashing Teapots and Knitting Mufflers:

The Development of British Mormon Identity 1911-1918

By

Elizabeth E. Mawlam

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Committee Approval Page

To the Graduate Faculty,

The members of the committee appointed to examine the thesis of ELIZABETH MALAM find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Nov 9, 2022 | 9:34 AM PST

Dr. Justin Dolan Stover,

Committee Chair

Nov 9, 2022 | 11:35 AM MST

Dr. Marie Stango,

Committee Member

Nov 12, 2022 | 10:41 PM PST

Dr. Margaret Johnson,

Graduate Faculty Representative

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Abstract

**Smashing Teapots and Knitting Mufflers: The Development of
British Mormon Identity 1911-1918**

This thesis addresses the shortfall in Mormon historiography of non-American perspectives and identity. British Mormonism has typically been used to support an American Mormon historical agenda, often a teleological narrative that emphasizes periods of high convert growth. Consequently, the subjective experience of British members on a localized level has barely been examined. British Mormonism of the early twentieth century has been overlooked primarily because, as a period of low baptism rates, it has been seen as irrelevant to a wider Mormon historical agenda. This thesis argues that this period can be utilized as a lens through which to see how Mormonism in Britain developed relative to the experiences and perspectives of its British members. In the early twentieth century, several factors contributed to the evolution of a British Mormon identity, such as the end of the Mormon emigration program, a redefinition of non-American Mormon communities, involvement of Britons in Church local leadership, and a reconfiguration of British Mormon behavior. Exacerbated by the turbulence of the First World War, British Mormons were demarcating what it meant to be Mormon in their own space and time.

Keywords: Mormonism, First World War, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, British Isles, Religious History, Twentieth Century, Religious Identity, Women's History, Emigration History, Mormon Diaspora

Introduction

Israel, Israel, God is speaking. Hear your great Deliv'rer's voice!
Now a glorious morn is breaking For the people of his choice.
Come to Zion, come to Zion, And within her walls rejoice.
Come to Zion, come to Zion, And within her walls rejoice.[1]

In 1987 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) celebrated the

sesquicentennial of the first missionaries crossing the Atlantic to seek converts from the Old

World.[2] Pageants and parades venerated the faith of 80,000 European immigrants that had

breathed life into the struggling American Church like a transfusion to an ailing patient.[3] The

event recalled the 1837 mission of seven apostles sent to England from Ohio to spread a message

of Christian restoration that imitated original Christianity.[4] Only seven years prior in 1830,

Mormonism had been established by the founder-prophet Joseph Smith in upstate New York, a

new religious movement of the Second Great Awakening. Deeply apocalyptic, the steady stream

of Mormon converts aimed to build a millenarian Zionistic community, raising a temple as the

center of worship.[5] However, persistent friction with neighbors forced the young Church to

meander across Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. After building the prosperous city of Nauvoo,

allegations of theocratic rule, polygamy and bloc voting culminated in the assassination of Smith

and the abandonment of Nauvoo. By 1868, up to 70,000 Mormons had walked across the

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[1] Richard Smyth, "Israel, Israel, God is Calling," *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,* (Salt Lake City, 1985), p7

[2] Although the Church does not currently recognize the name "Mormon," this has been used historically as a title and so will be used throughout to refer to the religion. The name "saints" is a synonym for Mormon, referring to its biblical context of a member of Christ's Church.

[3] James R. Christianson, "The Gathering to Zion: Its Nature and Implication", *Regional Studies in Latter-Day Saint Church History,* (Provo, 1990), p117.

[4] The highest governing body of the Church is the First Presidency consisted of the prophet and two counsellors. This is supported by a governing body of twelve apostles.

[5] Temples are the most sacred Church building where rituals are performed. It is not to be confused with regular meeting house.

American plains to find religious freedom in the Great Salt Lake Basin, where the Church would continue its socio-religious experiment and prepare for the second coming of Jesus Christ.[6]

The 1987 sesquicentennial celebrations were expressed by bonneted children walking town parades, music concerts, and lectures to reverence British Mormon contribution. These event reflected a nostalgia typical of Latter-day Saints to look at their history as a series of baptisms in rivers, risky ocean voyages, long wagon trails and trekking in petticoats. Within Mormon historical tradition, British Mormons have long claimed their role to be a foundational component of the whole Mormon narrative, without which the experiment of Zion would have most likely failed. Although crucial to Mormon heritage, the historical veneration of British pioneers has reduced British Mormon history to an ancillary role within an American-centric Mormon narrative. It has not considered the unique experience of British members, or how they related the religion to their own society and culture. The result has been a history of Mormonism in Britain rather than a history of British Mormonism. The purpose of this thesis is to explore what it meant to be Mormon in a British context, using the First World War as a lens through which to discover the idiosyncratic nature of British Mormonism. "Smashing teapots and knitting mufflers" refers to how British Mormons established their identity by simultaneously adopting Mormon culture while confirming their Britishness through war participation.

Crucial to the development of this historiography and conceptualization of British Mormon identity is an overview of the major transitions that occurred within the Church as the nineteenth century closed, specifically the end of polygamy, demise of emigration and emergence of the Church onto the American political scene. The Mormonism of the early twentieth century looked starkly different from the kind practiced by the group of settlers that

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[6] Christine T. Cox, "Mormon Emigration Facts," ChurchofJesusChrist.org, 6 March 2018, https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/blog/mormon-pioneer-emigration-facts?lang=eng

entered the Great Basin in 1847. For forty years Mormons unapologetically practiced plural

marriage, combined the rule of church and government, and welcomed thousands of European

immigrants to bolster their numbers. However, the reality of American westward expansion

meant the dreams of a literal Kingdom of God were short lived as the sprawling American

empire engulfed the territory, a process exacerbated by the expansion of the railways.[7] Through

frequent disputes with the federal government, it soon became clear that their sanctuary in the

Rockies was not far enough from their former nation. This coincided with a rising generation

craving acceptance, toleration, and participation within broader American society.

The first significant change that had a ripple effect on the Mormon experience in Britain

was the end of polygamy. Abandonment of plural marriage was the greatest caveat for

assimilation of Mormonism into broader American culture. Abhorrent to American sensibilities,

polygamy was regarded as incompatible with an Anglo-Saxon Protestant republic, equally

maligned as prostitution in the public mind.[8] As it became increasingly obvious that the church

could not exist separately within the United States, or be included as long as it practiced

polygamy, the Edmunds-Tucker Act 1887 initiated the imprisonment of Mormon polygamists,

confiscation of Church property, disenfranchisement of men and women, and the removal of

Mormon elected officials who would not condemn the practice. The Church had no possibility of

survival unless they relinquished their marital order.

Yet polygamy had been one of the pillars of Mormon doctrine and raison d'etre for the

most devout members since the mid-1850s. Although only an estimated 20-30% of Mormons

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[7] One may argue the Mormons were the ones expanding the frontier as settler colonists. However, it is important to note that at this point, Mormons did not regard themselves as expansionists but rather as refugees leaving the U.S. into Mexican/Indian territory.

[8] Audrey M. Godfrey, "We Are Living for Eternity: Joseph F. Smith's Vision for the LDS Women," *Times of Transition 1890-1920,* ed Thomas G. Alexander, (Provo, 2000), p45

practiced polygamy, through Brigham Young the marriage system became a central principle to the theocratic social order, as well as a prerequisite to the highest degree of celestial glory. To discard polygamy would require a complete reconfiguration of how Mormons perceived society on earth and in the afterlife. Ultimately, they would be resigning their hopes for a unique political, spiritual, and economic kingdom.[9] The cessation of polygamy would alter the status quo of Utahn Mormon life, the expectations of immigrants and the message missionaries brought to the world.

Unsurprisingly, the change disoriented many church members, causing much ambiguity, confusion, and debate. To smooth the transition, two official declarations by the President of the Church in 1890 and 1907 aimed to explain and reconfirm the church's new position on polygamy. It was made clear that any further polygamous marriages would result in excommunication. Yet the removal of such an integral component of praxis and identity left a vacuum that needed to be filled. Although polygamy had been central to Mormonism for forty years, it had not actually been one of the founding principles of the church in 1830, but rather increased in relevance as its secretive practice became public once the sect left American territorial and legislative jurisdiction. Therefore, to decrease polygamy's centrality whilst retaining a cohesive belief system, Mormonism reverted to other earlier teachings of Joseph Smith, repositioning them at the fore of the Mormon creed. As these doctrines were reemphasized, Mormonism went through a "golden age" of theological expansion that has been the foundation of Mormon thought ever since.[10]

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[9] Dale Beecher, "The Post-Gathering Expansion of Zion: Mormon Settlements of the twentieth century," *Times of Transition,* p108

[10] Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of An American Faith,* (New York, 2012), p279, Apple books

Along with the demise of polygamy, the end of 'gathering' as a defining characteristic of the religion had a profound impact on the course of Mormonism.[11] Since its inception, the Church had recalled biblical Zion, rendering it a founding principle of Latter-day Christianity. Like Enoch's city or the Land of Canaan, Joseph Smith's Zion would literally be God's people on the earth, although this time it would be a place of refuge from apocalyptic sin and destruction. Only a few years after the Church's founding in 1830, missionaries were sent throughout the world to sift through populations and find the "remnants of scattered Israel," the "pure in heart" and bring them to Zion. In Britain, poverty, non-Conformist diversity and religious fervour favored the missionary message with 34,000 baptisms in the first ten years.[12] By the 1840s emigration had become central to the message of their Christian Restoration, with tens of thousands leaving Britain to join Zion, following the body of saints to New York, Ohio, Illinois and eventually, Utah.[13] Yet by 1898 federal patience with Mormon immigration had waned while Utah lacked the resources to support the continual influx of the poor, necessitating a dramatic shift in policy.

As young American Mormons concentrated on navigating their assimilation into the United States, the effects caused by the end of emigration may have been slow to appear in the American West. Yet to the British, the change in policy disrupted a tradition that was at the core of their religion. For fifty years baptism had often been followed by receiving the "spirit of gathering," an overwhelming desire to join the central community of saints in America. While some were certainly economically motivated to emigrate, many Britons nethertheless saw in Mormonism their spiritual and physical redemption as they looked towards Zion for salvation.

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[11] Michael L. Rasmussen, *The Making of a British Zion,* (University of Utah, July 2016), p27
[12] Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain,* (Salt Lake City, 1937), pp244-245
[13] From 1840-1900, almost 50,000 Mormons emigrated from Britain alone. Source Evans, pp244-245

The removal of such central orthopraxy required British saints to redefine what it meant

to be Mormon outside of the United States (or even, the American West). With conversion no

longer equating to emigration, Mormon theology necessitated a revision of the concept of Zion.

In his recent book, *The Building of a British Zion,* Michael Rasmussen highlights the evolution

of Mormon Zionist thought, specifically in a British context. He explains how the Church

gradually replaced Joseph Smith's vision of a singular Kingdom of God with the idea of Zion as

a state of righteousness that can and should exist throughout the world. The meaning of Zion

shifted to necessitate building British temples, meeting houses, establish stakes and fill the

leadership with native saints.[14] Rasmussen relates the strenuous process throughout the twentieth

century that Britons took to construct their own Zion. Increasingly, British saints became just as

zealous to expand their vision of Zion in their homeland as they had been about emigration.

Historians such as Rasmussen have typically marked the 1950s as the moment Britons

finally let go of emigration and internalized the new concept of a British Zion. A spike in post-

WWII emigration is used to indicate that a deep-rooted gathering ethos lingered.[15] The

dedication of the London Temple in 1958 and the creation of the first stake in Manchester in

1960 accompanied by a baptism explosion, are used as definitive evidence of the formation of a

British Mormon community.

Unsurprisingly, historians have overlooked the early twentieth century as significant in

the formation of a British Mormon Zionist community and identity. Rather, it is seen as a period

of uncertainty, survival, and ambiguity. This is partly because it is unclear from what point

emigration was discouraged, with historians marking the change as early as 1898 or as late as the

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[14] A stake is similar to a diocese, a group of local units under the leadership of a stake president. Once organized, it is usually described as evidence of the establishment of Zion in an area.
[15] Rasmussen, p45

1950s. Unlike the disavowal of polygamy, there was not a manifesto to explain the cessation of emigration, thus allowing room for uncertainty and speculation in its application. This was most apparent on President Joseph F. Smith's tour of Britain in 1906, when he did not direct, but merely counselled the Saints to "not be in a hurry, but when you go to Zion do not expect that you are going there to just lie in a bed of roses. There are the same challenges as in England."[16] On a microlevel, early twentieth century American missionaries were untrained and unsure as to how to adapt their sermons to avoid talk of emigration, especially as a new concept of Zion was not yet fully expanded. They guilelessly continued to romanticize the Intermountain West as the promised land, celebrating the departures of the small trickle of immigrants. Due to this lack of clarity on emigration policy and theology, as well as the continued references to America as Zion, historians have placed British Mormonism as outside the boundaries of the legitimate Church, presuming the members to be weak and unable to form strong communities of their own. American Mormons believed British members longed to emigrate whilst trapped in their war-torn country.

Yet upon closer examination of British Mormonism in the early 1900s, members were not as distracted by emigration as has been supposed but were forming their own communities that resembled Mormon Zion ideology. Records indicate small, but tight-knit congregations that not only revolved around worship and socializing, but merged British and Mormon culture and values. By specifically examining the function of British Mormonism around the First World War we can see how its members linked their communities and beliefs to the war effort, even while the American Church expressed its own differing views on the conflict. Similarly, the war

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[16] Richard O. Cowan. "Church Growth in England," *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the British Isles 1837-1987,* ed V. Ben Bloxham, Larry C. Porter, James R. Moss, (Salt Lake City, 1987), p234

created a situation that minimized dependence on American missionaries and leadership, giving Britons the unprecedented prerogative to direct their own affairs. Ultimately the war provides a lens through which Mormonism in Britain is revealed not as disorientated and naive, but self-aware and proactive. Although trivial in numbers compared to the later growth of the 50s and 60s, and years before global reinterpretations of Zion became official, British Mormon identity was forming as a product of Zionist theology, albeit outside the traditional American location.

A third transition around the turn of the century that had considerable impact on Mormons, including those in Britain, was the assimilation of American Mormons into mainstream politics. This move ended a fraught relationship with the Republic that had been perpetuated since its origin. Although he revered the Constitution, Joseph Smith had gradually become disillusioned with democracy, unable to reconcile Illinois to his powerful bloc vote. Believing the state and federal governments failed to protect the rights of the Church, Smith increasingly implemented theocratic elements to preserve his rule. After his assassination, the refugees turned their back on the Republic, aiming to create a Zion that would be led by a prophet at the head of a vertical priesthood hierarchy. Yet as more non-Mormons moved into the Utah territory, pressure would be exerted for the separation of church and state, resulting in the Utah War 1857-1858 and the appointment of a non-Mormon governor by the federal government.

Despite the remnants of theocracy still apparent, Utah was granted statehood in 1896. However, the Mormon Political Manifesto 1895, a short-lived move by Church leadership that required members to receive First Presidency approval before running for office, demonstrated how painful it was for Mormon leadership to separate their religion and politics. Simultaneously, the denial of polygamist Mormon leader B. H. Robert's Senate Seat by Congress in 1898

exposed how Americans still suspected Mormons to be conflicted in their loyalties towards

nation and prophet. The next decade saw an internal and public struggle of Mormon leadership to

reconfigure their role in influencing the politics of their community. In 1904 the electoral victory

of Apostle Reed Smoot to the Senate appeared as proof that the Mormon elite were still

incapable of extricating control from politics. However, a four-year hearing in Congress that

interrogated Smoot and the Prophet on details of polygamy, temple oaths, communalism,

autocratic rule, and economic control forced the church to concede that full participation in

American society required the Church to relinquish its political power. Smoot finally took his

seat after President Joseph F. Smith reassured the Senate that members of the Mormon Church

"[were] among the freest and most independent people of all the Christian denominations. They

[were] not all united on every principle. Every man [was] entitled to his own opinion and his

own views.[17]

The effect of the Smoot hearings on the separation of Mormon political and religious

leadership cannot be underestimated. At the heart of the debate was the extent of authority held

by the Prophet, where the boundaries of canon end and the freedom of opinion began. Although

Mormon philosophy prized individual liberty, the prophet was regarded as endowed with

foresight, even politically, that would steer the country in the direction God intended. Yet even

prominent Mormon leaders began to vocalize their belief that outside the Kingdom of God, one

man's political judgement may be as good as another's.[18] Brian Q. Cannon argues that the

General Election of 1912 represented a turning point in how Mormons viewed the boundaries of

the prophet's sovereignty. President Smith's endorsement of Republican William Howard Taft

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"[17] Bowman, p478

[18] Cannon, Brian Q., '"Taft has made me a good President": Mormons and Presidential Politics in the Election of 1912,' *Times of Transition 1890-1920,* p60

triggered the question that the new citizens of the Republic had to face. On one side America was compared to ancient Israelites, who "suffered calamities because they refused to obey and listen to the words of an inspired prophet."[19] In contrast, the politically frustrated declared that "Mormon people [were] not a bunch of cattle or sheep to be bundled into this camp or that… What President Smith says about Taft [was] a personal expression of opinion."[20]

Yet historians are divided over the extent that Smith influenced the Utah election result of 1912. Thomas Alexander argues that Smith directly impacted the results, showing how Utah had not yet evolved into a pluralistic political community. Yet Austin Wahlquist states that the results were coincidental to Smith's endorsement, that the press ultimately shaped opinion.[21] Either way, Cannon pinpoints the election's significance, that the situation created tensions and ambiguities that provided enough space and justification for Mormons to disagree with the prophet without consequence.[22] This compartmentalization of politics and prophetic privileges would invariably effect non-American Mormons by allowing them the autonomy to faithfully practice Mormonism while retaining world views that reflected their own circumstance. In Britain, for instance, members found they could more easily abide prophetic leadership while simultaneously holding varying British political views and support of the war.

Mormon historiography has significantly overlooked how the vast changes surrounding polygamy, emigration and politics affected its global membership. The primary purpose of British Mormon history has been to support a teleological narrative of American missionary triumph. Books such as *Truth Will Prevail* (1987), presents early British Mormonism as the apex of successful missionary work through which many key leaders and bulk membership joined the

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[19] Cannon, p59
[20] Cannon, p56
[21] Cannon, p62
[22] Cannon, p64

church and emigrated to Utah. However, by recounting Britain's glorious past, the book was also promoting British Mormonism of the late twentieth century as more of a repeated success story, than one of international establishment and growth. Similar to the success of the apostolic missions, the growth of the contemporary British Church was seen as the grand effort of post-World War II missionary work, a stunning success that demonstrated what can happen when converts do not emigrate but implant Mormonism in their own lands. Britons buttressed the early church, then a century later, created a standard of international Mormonism, one built to stay.[23] With a British temple, full programs, local leadership and growing acceptance within society, American missionaries had created an appendage to Zion, a significant force in a movement that was now global.

Baptism statistics have been the baseline for an American triumphal narrative in Britain, with little attention paid to the experiences of members. Consequently, the periods in which missionary activity and success were low have been overlooked. In particular, the fifty years from the end of mass emigration, around 1898, to the late 1950s, appear as a vacuum, the details regarded as insignificant to the main American Church agenda. Without the "gathering" (emigration) program, proficient war-time leaders, high conversion rates, temples, or even chapels, the Church in Britain was regarded as "dead in the water," without a story worth telling. [24] Relishing in the celebrations of 1987, historians of the late twentieth century dismissed these decades, stating that during this time, the Church was simply waiting for the breeze of the 1950s and 60s to fill the sails of their becalmed ship.[25]

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[23] Anne S. Perry, "The Contemporary Church", *Truth Will Prevail,* (Germany, 1987), p424
[24] Christianson, *Regional Studies,* p129
[25] Christianson, p130

Of course, when looking at missionary and membership statistics, British Mormonism of the early twentieth century was hardly significant compared to its previous prominence. By 1892 there remained a meagre 2600 members throughout Britain, with meeting attendance even less.[26] Baptisms would remain low throughout the World Wars, with many members unable to resist the temptation to flee to Utah despite the demise of the official emigration program. Congregations continued to rely heavily on visiting Americans for leadership, while members could not attend the temple, often seen as the symbol of full participation and Mormon identity. British Mormonism was an emaciated shadow of its vigorous pioneer golden age, an incohesive collective that consistently struggled with persecution and acceptance into society at large. It seems obvious that historians have focused on the explosion of activity that took place from the 1950s onwards.[27]

However, recent Mormon historical scholarship of the twentieth century has aimed to retreat from a lineal progressive narrative. Instead of using instruments of quantity to ascertain if further historical inquiry is warranted, studies of Mormonism have been more qualitatively concerned with the actual experiences of members within a specific place and time. What it meant to be Mormon is seen as a subjective issue, how individuals related their faith to personal circumstances and worldview. British Mormonism developed in relation to the specific experiences and environments of its members. This new approach counteracts the notion of Mormons as an extremely homogenous group, while opening the study of Mormonism to

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[26] Alexander L. Baugh, "The Church in Twentieth Century Great Britain: A Historical Overview," in *Regional Studies in Latter-Day Saint Church History: The British Isles,* ed Cynthia Doxey, Robert C. Freeman, Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, and Dennis A. Wright (Brigham Young University, 2007), 237-59

[27] British Mormon membership stood at 45,206 by 1962. Source: Alexander L. Baugh, "The Church in Twentieth Century Great Britain: A Historical overview," https://rsc.byu.edu/regional-studies-latter-day-saint-church-history-british-isles/church-twentieth-century-great

participate and contribute within wider circles of religious, cultural, and social history. Chapter 1 of this thesis discusses in greater detail the necessary development of this historiography.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate what it meant to be Mormon in Britain during the early twentieth century. It contradicts the long-held assumption that British Mormonism was weak and over-reliant on the American Church. It also argues that many faithful British Mormons were not distracted by a longing to emigrate but were invested in growing the Church in Britain. British Mormonism was profoundly affected by its own encounter with changes within the American Church, home-grown persecution, its social relations with American missionaries, and by the upheaval caused by the First World War. Influenced by these conditions, British members forged a unique Mormon identity born of their own locale, perspectives, and experiences. The result is a reconceptualization of British Mormonism, a branch of the Church that was heavily influenced by its American counterparts, as it simultaneously developed an idiosyncratic identity that was relative to its host culture. This research offers a case study of how individuals maneuver membership within a foreign church while remaining in their native society. It is also useful in demonstrating Mormonism as a heterogeneous religious organization and experience, comparable to other religions.

Chapter one explains in greater depth the historiography of Mormonism and the necessity of its expansion in approach and methodology. To be included within general scholarship, Mormon Studies must undergo historical and sociological scrutiny. This thesis is intended to contribute to the Global Mormon Studies initiative that aims to look at the experiences of members outside the United States.

Chapter two argues that British Mormon identity was built on a foundation of exceptionalism formed and justified by persecution. The hostility, instigated by the highly

organized Anti-Mormon Crusade 1911-1914, allowed British members to claim victimization status, a common theme of wholesale Mormonism identity. This shared experience of persecution connected British members to the main Church body, even as they remained physically distant. Their vindication by a subsequent Parliamentary investigation also validated Mormonism as a lawful component of British society.

Part one of chapter three argues that evidence of a British Mormon identity can be ascertained by evaluating differences between British Mormons and the American missionaries on assignment in Britain. In comparison, Britons were far more reconciled with the idea of Mormonism as a permanent feature of British society. This was demonstrated in British Mormon attitudes towards other Christian churches and a flexible understanding of what it meant to be a faithful Latter-Day Saint. Part two argues that British Mormon identity evolved as the members redefined the concept of Zion. Traditionally, historians argue that the theology of Zion did not adapt until after World War II, that British members were distracted by the longing to emigrate up to the late 1950s. However, as early as the First World War, British Mormons were less focused on emigration than has been previously suggested and were already considering the possibility of an extension of Zion existing within their own country. These developments were accelerated during the First World War as British members took over leadership and missionary duties.

Chapter four examines how during the First World War, Britons expressed their Mormon identity through specific actions and behaviors. British members felt a strong need to find acceptance into larger society but retain a distinct Mormon persona at the core. They navigated the creation of identity by promoting their patriotism through contributions to the British war effort, building relations formally and informally with other social groups and creating tight-knit

communities. A Mormon identity was expressed through sentiments of exceptionalism and stressing specific Mormon behavior, in particular the Word of Wisdom.[28] During the conflict, British Mormons were infused with a unique sense of identity and purpose that was formed by their experiences with both faith and nationality. Central to these developments was the establishment of the Relief Society, an organization for female Mormons that gave them a platform to combine Church and community work.

The primary sources used in this thesis are largely taken from the *Millennial Star,* the Church's official publication for the British Isles. Originating in 1840, the paper was distributed weekly during the First World War. It continued as the main Church publication in Britain until 1970, when it was replaced by a worldwide magazine. Although this seems narrow in scope, the publications offer over 2,000 pages of content for the war years alone. The aim of this thesis is to explore how the Latter-day Saints identified themselves, rather than how British society viewed the Church. The *Millennial Star* is suited to for this purpose, offering vast amounts of insight from a variety of members. Other supporting sources include the journals of American missionaries and mission presidents. Another valuable tool has been the transcripts of interviews that were conducted with elderly members in 1986 and 1987 as part of the British segment of the Church Educational System Oral History Project. Although these sources have limitations, notably sidelining the views of disillusioned members and the fact the *Star* was edited by the American mission president, they still provide ample evidence to support the main arguments of this thesis.

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[28] The Word of Wisdom is the Mormon health code, originating in 1833. More details are given in chapter four.

Chapter One – Questioning an Inherently American Mormon Historiography

"We cannot become cultured apart from history."
          The Millennial Star, 29 January 1914[29]

The political and social transitions that occurred in the Mormon Church in the early twentieth century had a direct impact on British members. As the Church altered some core practices and aligned itself with American politics and ideology, this left non-American members on the periphery of a new Mormon culture. British converts were left to decipher how the gospel message related to their own time and space. Their experiences are outside the main narrative of Mormonism that has not considered how individuals have identified with Mormonism in junction with their home culture and society. This research joins a surge of recent works on Mormon history that has been made possible through the foundational work of twenty and twenty-first century New Mormon History. A brief overview of these historiographical developments is useful in constructing the context and purpose of this thesis as a contribution to non-American Mormon historical perspectives.

Although some noteworthy works existed previously, the 1960s marked a significant shift in Mormon historical thought. This move avoided the frequently captious motives of detractors on one side and eschewed the defensive hagiologies typical of Mormon scholars on the other. Leonard Arrington, official Church historian and key initiator of New Mormon History, saw the particular need to pull away from simple "frontier tradition" narratives that functioned primarily to support the Church.[30] Rather he saw greater value in detailing Mormon history and culture in

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[29] Arthur L. Beeley, "Christless Philosophies," *Millennial Star,* 29 January 1914, p73
[30] Leonard Arrington, 'Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century,' *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,* Vol.1, No.1 (1966), pp 19-20

human or naturalistic terms.[31] Although the secularization of Mormon historiography meant it would be fair game for detached examination and clarification, he believed in time this would allow the church a fuller and more sensitive hearing.[32]

Arrington saw these developments as the natural result of church amalgamation into wider society, including the embrace of dominant scientific and democratic culture.[33] Yet despite the assimilation of Mormonism into wider society, Arrington believed that the evaluation of secular aspects of church function would not disrupt its spiritual goals. He was unconcerned that a disconnect from old-style apologetics would encourage a variety of scholars to use Mormonism as a site that could enrich general American studies and history. Consequently, despite occasional resistance from the Church institution, as the objectives and themes of Mormon History expanded, so too did its relevance within academia. Currently, Mormon Studies continues to examine the religion as a site for contemporary and historical study of religion as social, economic, intellectual, political, and economic phenomena.[34]

The product of Mormon Studies is a detailed survey of both a unique and typical religious community, one whose existence and character has been shaped by both singular and mainstream dogma, as well as social isolation and incorporation. Upon reflection of these multiple influences, Patrick Q. Mason suggests that the real significance of Mormon examination is its elucidation of human experience and personality. Rather than a homogenous group of frontier dwellers united in subordination to a vertically aligned male hierarchy, the studies reveal a society that changed through internal (and external) conflict affecting a multiplicity of Mormon

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[31] Arrington, p28
[32] Arrington, p28
[33] Arrington, p20
[34] Patrick Q. Mason, "Introduction," *Directions for Mormon Studies in the twenty first Century,* (University of Utah, 2016), p3

identities.[35] Yet Mason is eager to point out that until very recently, these analyses have been overwhelmingly confined to the study of Mormons living in the United States, often within a nineteenth century historical framework. This insinuates that there is an abundance of research to be done relating to what it means or has meant to be Mormon outside of the American nineteenth century context. Consequently, Mason has called for a reassessment of Mormonism in the twentieth century, focusing on the dynamic interplay of Mormonism's historical, cultural, and religious roots in the United States with its international expansion and encounter with global diversity.[36] This thesis is situated within this current growing trend of historical research otherwise known as Global Mormon Studies. It examines how British Mormons navigated their relationships with Americans and implemented the religion in a regional context.

Still, within Global Mormon Studies historiography there are numerous approaches and agendas. For instance, Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks see the studies as an opportunity for the "de-colonization" of Mormonism. Arguing that the Church mirrors colonial characteristics in the way it manages and relates to its Indigenous and non-American members, they assert that the institution has made it difficult for those not living in the Church's metropole to have their cultural needs accepted or their local wisdom heard.[37] They further argue that the Church has reflected American exceptionalism in the way it has informed its interactions with its non-American adherents. Specifically, the ideology of Zion has been complicated by American-centric ideologies that preference white middle-class sensibilities.[38] Although Colvin and Brooks focus on the decolonization of contemporary Mormonism, they suggest that a historical study of

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[35] Mason, p4
[36] Mason, P7
[37] Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks, 'Introduction', *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Post-Colonial Zion,* ed Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks, (University of Utah, 2018), p4
[38] Colvin and Brooks, Pp 10,12

Global Mormonism is a necessary tool in the process. They hope that the history of Global Mormonism will highlight institutional practice and discourse that instantiate certain forms of cultural behaviors, ideologies and narratives that reflect more closely the interests of the Utah church than they do local cultures. They propose that by facing their history, Mormons will 'receive from its storms the energy that will propel [them] forward in understanding.'[39] Furthermore, they assert that such analyses will reveal points of resistance, adaption, and innovation, thus creating a 'viable faith tradition at the margins.' [40]

Although Brooks and Colvin's suggestions create a valid line of inquiry, they also represent a divergence from the aims of early New Mormon History, which generally agreed that its purpose was not to be used as a tool to influence or direct the Church itself.[41] While Brooks and Colvin's attention of Global Mormon History would certainly contribute to the survey, such as Mason's theme of Mormon identity, their underlying political agenda simultaneously reduces the potential of such studies to a commentary on Church function. By simply using Global Mormon history to support an anti-colonial hypothesis, they fail to consider the array and depth of perspectives that histories of non-American Mormons may bring to Mormon Studies. For example, although there may be utility in identifying the American church as a neo-colonial construct, this insinuates that there was usually an imbalance of power between American and non-American members with the former always taking the initiative. In contrast, this thesis in provides an example of the British members asserting self-reliance, leadership, and individualism.

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[39] Colvin and Brooks, P11
[40] Colvin and Brooks, P7
[41] Arthur Henry King, "Introduction", *Mormonism: A Faith for All Cultures,* ed F. LaMond Tullis, (BYU, 1978), p3

In response to assumptions of Mormon colonialism, Melissa Inouye has challenged imperialist interpretations of evangelical organizations, arguing that they oversimplify complex cultural exchanges and ignore the agency of non-Americans.[42] Referring to Chinese converts, Inouye argues that locals often translate the gospel in their own social and spiritual realities for the fulfillment of their own goals. The spread of global organizations and culture is not necessarily a homogenizing process but one that creates local distinctive forms.[43] Furthermore, the experience of being Mormon and how one relates to the American church and culture varies significantly between countries and regions, and even further at intersections of class, gender, race and age. Therefore, the concept of Mormon colonialism fails to consider the detailed variety of experience and identity that existed on micro, but influential, levels.

However, the paradigm of colonialism is to an extent misunderstood if applied to British Mormon history. Mormonism has a very strong British heritage with the early twentieth century seeing many Utah resident ex-patriates, British-born missionaries, and British leaders influencing the Church. Indeed, the cultural overlap and shared identity of American and British Mormons, especially in the early twentieth century, suggest it is an unsuitable site to investigate the reality of Mormon colonialism when compared to the experiences of a plethora of alternatives, especially the experiences of non-white members. Therefore, while this thesis questions the de-colonization aspect of Global Mormon History, it recognizes its intended application is limited in a British context. Indeed, in many ways British Mormonism mirrored the Utah Mormon experience.

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[42] Melissa Inouye, "A Tale of Three Primaries", *Decolonizing Mormonism, Approaching a Post-Colonial Zion,* ed Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks, (University of Utah, 2018), p230
[43] Inouye, p231

Still, the study of British Mormonism is significant as a contribution to the current aims of Global Mormon History, but also as a unique inquiry into a branch of Mormonism. There are many presumptions of what it meant to be Mormon in Edwardian Britain, its history often reduced to statistical analyses of missionary work, emigration, and activity rates. Julie K. Allen explains how historiography of European Mormons has typically been composed through a missionary lens, infused with a heroic-triumphalist tone.[44] She argues that when a country is reduced to stereotypes and statistics, we lose the chance to delve into the realities of subjective experience that lie behind the numbers.[45] The reduction of European Mormon history is perhaps unsurprising, considering how for decades European converts were primarily considered as immigrant boosters for the project of Zion in the United States. Mormon history has been slow to consider how Mormonism intersects with European cultures as distinct entities with their own world views, rather than existing as appendages of the American church.

Therefore, while there is consensus on the need for Global Mormon history, how it should be pursued is currently under discussion. Historians of Mormonism are questioning which situations, policies, beliefs, or practices expose relevant disparities between American and non-American Mormons. In response, Wilfried Decoo has suggested four themes as sites of analysis in which to explore the meaning of Mormon identity. First, he proposes consideration of how non-Americans responded to the Utahn location of the Church headquarters. This refers to the idea of America as a "Promised Land", implying that non-American Saints may have restructured this concept to harmonize their own patriotism. Decoo further suggests some non-American members used tensions between the Church and U.S. government as a helpful

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[44] Julie K. Allen, 'Neither Fairyland nor Dystopia: Taking Western Europe Seriously in Mormon Studies,' *Mormon Studies Review,* Vol. 6, (January 2019), p35
[45] Allen, p37

narrative to demonstrate it was not the political entity of America that was "chosen," but rather the soil.[46] By considering location and proximity, we can consider how the worldviews of Mormon exceptionalism were altered when situated far from the main source.

Similarly, Decoo recommends exploring how non-American Latter-day Saints responded to American ideology that was often conflated with Church doctrinal teachings. He suggests themes such as American superiority, assertiveness, individualism and personal achievement as areas that could have been seen as foreign to other cultures and traditions. Decoo also questions how non-American saints responded to hierarchal lines of authority, which he terms as 'colonizing practices from church headquarters.'[47] Finally, Decoo proposes looking at how the Saints responded to behavioral patterns of Americans. As conversion was often a counter-cultural process, it would be useful to see to what extent individuals mimicked Americanness to construct a new Mormon self.

Much of this thesis resembles the themes of study presented by Decoo. They are useful as points at which to consider how non-American Mormons interpreted and incorporated traditional Mormon culture and dogma to suit their own situations. However, this approach alone is deficient. Not only is it important to examine which aspects of Mormonism non-Americans minimalized or rejected, we must consider what behavior, ideology or expectations appeared in lieu of those normally found among American Mormons. Mason's multiplicity of Mormon identity relies in the appearance of alternative distinct identities that shared values of their own society as equal to the Church. It follows Inouye's argument that Mormon experience worldwide is much more heavily shaped by local context than by directives.[48]

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[46] Wilfried Decoo, "Expanding Research for the Expanding International Church", *Directions for Mormon Studies in the twenty first Century,* ed Patrick Q. Mason, (University of Utah, 2016), p102
[47] Decoo, p103
[48] Inouye, p259

This thesis aims to contribute to the development of the historiography of Global Mormon Studies by examining the development of a characteristic British Mormon identity. Of course, how identity develops is relative to varying situations, locations, and time: therefore my choice to include the First World War as a suitable period to examine this theme is deliberate. In the early twentieth century, British members were directly influenced by dramatic changes within their own society and culture, as much as within the Church. Consequently, British Mormons were forced to reconsider their place in both their church communities and wider society, thus creating a situation that promoted adaptation of Mormon identity. How Britons responded to such dichotomy reveals how they developed for themselves their own varied functioning persona of Mormonism.

Chapter Two – Finding Purpose in Persecution

More Women Headquarters,
29 Azalea Terrace, Sunderland,
May 22nd 1912,

Sir: - On behalf of a number of individuals who have determinedly pledged themselves to rid the town of you and your dangerous propaganda, I beg to issue this as an ultimatum… to clear out of the town… or take the consequences.

"Anti-Mormon" [49]

On 26th March 1912, a crowd of thirty protestors stormed a Mormon Sunday School meeting held at the Gate Assembly Rooms in Nuneaton. Fleeing the scene, 64-year-old American Mormon missionary Elder Albert Smith, was accosted by one of the intruders. The *Nuneaton Observer* related, "[Smith] felt feathers flying all over him… [followed by] something very warm on his head and running down his face and over his clothes. By the smell he could tell it was gas tar… [He] held his head down… but he could not see until some of the tar was taken from his eyes. As a result, he suffered considerable pain and his clothes were damaged."[50] Two months later in Seaton Hirst, other missionaries were invited to an anti-Mormon rally to defend their religion. After "a little while, the minister pointed them out. [Following] was a rush from another crowd who had been waiting their call… supplied with rocks, clubs, sod etc., … [One missionary] finally succeeded in getting away, after being badly used. He was struck with a brick. His companions also [had] bruises on them."[51]

Since the arrival of missionaries in England in 1837, Mormon missionaries had experienced interdenominational friction. Yet the years 1911 to 1914 saw an unprecedented level

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[49] Rudger Clawson, "The Anti-"Mormon" Mass Meeting at Sunderland, *Millennial Star,* 30 May 1912, p347
[50] Rudger Clawson, "Anti-Mormon Leader Fined for Assault and Pays for Damages," *Millennial Star,* 13 June 1912, p374
[51] Rudger Clawson, "The Spirit of Mob Rule Still Active," *Millennial Star,* 6 June 1912, p363

of hostility, largely caused by a phenomenon of British paranoia towards white slave trafficking. Britons feared American Elders had come to Britain with the sole purpose of duping women into emigrating to Utah, only to be trapped into a life of polygamous servitude. Throughout Britain, Mormon missionaries became the symbol of institutionalized prostitution, moral corruption, and the potential downfall of civilization.[52] Scores of sectarian sermons called for "men of all creeds or no creed at all… to stand shoulder to shoulder in a battle against [Mormonism, to stop] the downfall of domestic life."[53]

Of course, persecution and prejudice had a profoundly detrimental effect on the efforts and activity of members. Church units stagnated as deaths, emigration and disillusionment were barely replenished by baptisms. Those performed from 1910 to 1919 were almost half the 7587 recorded for the years 1900 to 1909.[54] The memory of persecution as a negative episode was made apparent in numerous oral histories performed in 1986-87.[55] Dora Wintle explained how her branch had to frequently move the location of their meetings and endure "a lot of evil remarks from some of the neighbours."[56] Lucy Ripley Bradbury recollected how during the years of intense hostility, her mother stopped attending church in order to protect her children. She explained, "[Mother] didn't want to be looked down on by people because the persecution was that bad at that time. She started going after the war."[57] Most new converts experienced some

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[52] Malcolm R. Thorpe, "Winifred Graham and the Mormon image in England," *Journal of Mormon History,* Vol. 6 (1979), p116

[53] *The Times,* May 8, 1911, p6d

[54] Richard L. Evans, *A Century of "Mormonism" in Great Britain,* (Salt Lake City, 1937), pp244-245

[55] Brigham Young University conducted oral interviews as part of a project during the sesquicentennial celebrations of the Church in the UK.

[56] Typescript of Church Educational System Oral history Project: Dora B. Wintle interview, July 1986, Church Educational System (1970-) Area Administration (British Isles), CR 884114, Corporate Records, FILMING 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City

[57] Typescript of Lucy Ripley Bradbury interview: Bradford, England, 20 July 1987, Oral History, OH 800, FILMING 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City

form of ostracization from family, friends or colleagues. Others stepped back, judging that association with their congregation would damage employment and social opportunities.

Yet as most of the accusations of white slave trafficking were directed at missionaries, historians of Mormonism have analyzed this period through the lens of missionary work, and how the Elders dealt with reduced baptism rates, incidents of violence and published slander, "nearly [destroying] missionary prospects in Britain."[58] Somehow attention has not been paid to the British members who were unavoidably implicated. Even as they grappled with the demise of the gathering policy, the few remaining saints dealt with the efforts of the well-organized "Anti-Mormon Crusade", whose aim was the literal eradication of Mormonism from the British Isles. British Mormons faced intimidation, violence, damage to property and marginalization. When analyzing the early years of British Mormon maturation, anti-Mormonism is a key component. Within a few years, the hostility, demonstrated through hundreds of newspaper reports, novels, silent movies, lectures, rallies, and mobbing, created a situation that was crucial in the formation of a British Mormon identity. Looking less to emigration as an escape, many members alternatively responded to the persecution by reconfiguring the meaning of Mormonism within their own society. They used opposition as evidence of divine approval and exceptionalism, reflecting a consistent theme in American Mormon identity. Furthermore, as they increasingly envisioned their religion as a permanent feature within Britain, members focused their efforts on creating a unique community of saints. The persecution had the ironic effect of establishing a foundation on which Mormons fostered unity, proved commitment, and reinterpreted what it meant to be a Mormon outside of their American Zion.

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[58] Malcolm R. Thorpe, 'The British Government and the Mormon Question 1910-1922, *Journal of Church and State,* Vol. 21, Issue 2, (Summer 1979), p307

The precarious situation British Mormons faced forced them to reconsider what it meant to be Mormon in a non-American context. The fundamental question was whether Mormonism could exist in Britain as a recognized and protected non-Conformist religion under English law. Significantly, the excitement caused by the Anti-Mormon Crusade initiated a six-month parliamentary investigation into missionary activities and Mormon practice. Police interviewed members, read letters from female relatives in Utah and observed meetings.[59] Despite pressure from backbenchers, a less alarmed Winston Churchill reminded Conservatives to 'continue upon the solid rock of religious equality… giving tolerance, freedom, and the reverence to all religious beliefs, giving state favors, state enforcement, [and] state privilege to none."[60] On May 8, 1914, the House of Commons concluded to have "not… discovered any grounds for legislative action in the matter."[61] This vindication was crucial as it influenced how members regarded their religion within British society. It encouraged them to view Mormonism as belonging to traditional sectarianism, one that was entitled to protection of the law. The Government's conclusions encouraged members to celebrate Britain as liberal and progressive, a constitution that was worthy of accommodating the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Unlike Germany, who had expelled Mormon missionaries in July 1910, members saw Britain as now qualified to host the Church. Consequently, British members frequently referred to Parliamentary exoneration as the moment Mormonism was justified to exist and expand in their own land as well as in America.

While British Mormons used the law and liberal sensibilities to validate their place in British society, this did not mean they rejected strong ties with the American church. Even as

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[59] Ardis E. Parshall, "No Warrant for Special Legislation": The Report of Churchill's Investigation of the Mormons, 1910-1911, (Mormon Historical Association Presentation, Snowbird, Utah, 11 June 2016)

[60] Thorpe, "The British Government," p311

[61] J. M. S., "Reflections on Mobocracy," *Millennial Star,* 19 August 1915, p522

members reconfigured the meaning of British Mormonism, they continued to look to Utah as the

"Central Stake of Zion," the Promised Land where the Kingdom of God would be built. Rather,

Britons used persecution to attach themselves to wholesale Mormonism and identity, albeit

within their own space. Discrimination, violence, and misrepresentation had been core themes of

Mormon history and identity since its beginnings. The murder of Joseph Smith, extermination

orders and the mass exodus across the American Plains were celebrated integral components of

Mormon culture. Britons related their own experiences of persecution with how the early church

had fought for the right to exist. They noted "a continuous chain of such events in our history

from the time we first began… down to the present." [62] By creating a parallel of suffering,

Mormons reaffirmed their position within the faithful ranks of Mormonism, only in a specifically

British context.

Persecution not only gave British Mormons the opportunity to identify with the main

Church, but to assert their own variety of Mormon exceptionalism. One *Millennial Star* writer

mused, "There is a great gulf fixed between the 'Mormon' and the people of the world whether

we look at the proposition from a social or a religious point of view."[63] In their heavily Christian

society, the persecuted British saint used oppression as evidence they were genuine followers of

Christ. One writer connected British Mormon suffering to the torment of Christian saints of

antiquity, while comparing British journalists to the Sadducees that cried "crucify!" [64] Another

article demonstrated how some Mormons embraced ostracization as an indicator of true religion,

one that "fulfill[s]… prophecy to the letter." He wrote, "As a rule, as soon as a person is baptized

into the Church, he is made to feel that the society to which he has been accustomed no longer

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[62] T. W. B. "Reply to A Recent Critic," *Millennial Star,* 16 July 1914, p461
[63] Ibid., p539
[64] J. M. S. "Reflections of Mobocracy," *Millennial Star,* 19 August 1915, p520

has the least welcome for him."[65] British Mormons felt that through persecution, their discipleship was more meaningful and genuine in comparison to other Christians.

British Mormon rhetoric frequently appeared to have welcomed persecution, such as in the account of Rosa Hughes from Nelson, who extolled the cleansing and purifying effect of persecution on the individual. [66] This perspective remained with many members for decades, as they retrospectively looked to the era of persecution as a phase of growth and resilience. Seventy years later, Elsie Rickard reflected how she believed persecution had done the members good. She explained, "We had to watch what we were doing… because we knew we were being watched. It made us perhaps more aware of our responsibilities than it would have done if there hadn't been this persecution."[67] There is a lot of evidence that the slander drove British members to be proactive in refuting the claims as they looked for opportunities to discuss anti-Mormon propaganda, while records show that meeting attendance included high percentages of curious non-members who had been invited by British members.

Widespread persecution made British Mormons acutely aware of their maligned social position. Frederick Oates recalled leaving the Church building one Sunday only to have flour bags and grass sod thrown at him by hordes of people. He recalled, "The police weren't too helpful. The saints would ask them for protection, but I guess they were afraid, and we seldom got any real help. The policeman would turn his back and go the other way."[68] The frequent social ostracization that came with membership motivated British Mormons to create a distinct community. Loyalty towards each other was paramount as persecution was seen as a collective

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[65] *Millennial Star,* 13 August 1914, p539

[66] T. W. B., "Testimony from Anti-Mormon Sources," *Millennial Star,* 23 July 1914, p479

[67] Elsie Rickard, Oral history, August 13, 1986, Church history Department, CR 88485

[68] Typescript of Frederick W. Oates interview: Sunderland, England, Oral History, OH 836, FILMING 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City

British ordeal, as well as individual. Acquaintances became like family as converts rallied

together through frequent socializing, worshipping, serving each other and having a "jolly good

time."[69] Even though members were typically spread out, with small units covering multiple

towns, members were aware they belonged to a unique cooperative that endured a common trial.

The evidence demonstrated in oral histories that some members looked at persecution

positively could suggest it was not in fact particularly formidable. Yet, whether the threat faced

by British Mormons in the early twentieth century was of a particular peril is not the point. The

negative publicity influenced their self-perception, emboldening them to be exponents of

Mormonism within their own society, despite the risks. Lucy Ripley Bradbury recalled how her

mother, whilst watching an anti-Mormon rally, "Pushed herself through the crowd. She doubled

her fist… to [the preacher's] face and said, "You want to learn to speak the truth… I know

because I'm a Mormon." Bradbury continued, "Well, that was enough to incite the crowd… the

best thing you could do is get on the first tram you come to. That's how she got away from them.

We laugh about it now, but it wasn't funny then."[70] This self-awareness as a unique religious

minority was supported by the belief that they were sustained by divine protection and

justification. Lawrence Gregson reminisced how while his father was speaking at a meeting,

some agitators took hold of him and threatened to throw him over a parapet into the river

Mersey. Yet Gregson asserted that their failure to do so was through the intervention of God.[71]

That the persecution of Mormons in the early twentieth century was significant in the

creation of a British Mormon identity was demonstrated in the 1986 oral interviews of its elderly

[69] Typescript, Interview of Dora Wintle,
[70] Typescript, Interview of Lucy Ripley Bradbury,
[71] Typescript of Church Educational System Oral History Project: Lawrence and Doris Gregson Interview, 2 August 1986, Church Educational System (1970-) Area Administration (British Isles), Corporate Records, CR 884 114, Church History Library, Salt Lake City

members. These veterans clearly felt that the hostility they faced as foundational members of a young church was a key component in the story of British Mormonism. In Sunderland, one agitator missed stabbing a missionary, leaving permanent damage to a chair. Frederick Oates recalled saying, "When we go from this old chapel, we will take that chair with us as a memento of the days of the persecution."[72] As they looked back, they took pride in their conversion as one that had required great faith and courage in order to build the church from almost nothing.[73] While many members reacted to persecution by emigrating or retreating, others responded by reinventing what it meant to be a Mormon in British society. Although they were not missionaries, they saw themselves as ambassadors of Mormonism outside of Zion, disciples who were equally as zealous to show their commitment as the nineteenth century pioneer immigrant.

As the nineteenth century drew to close, the shifts in Mormon orthopraxy and theology had ripple effects throughout their small global membership. Furthermore, the impact of these changes merged with the challenges that were experienced on a local level, creating a Mormon experience that was idiosyncratic. These disruptions have created suppositions that early twentieth century British Mormonism was disorientated, superficial, fragile, and immature. Slow baptism rates, poor retention and continual emigration have caused some to assert that the British Mission verged on closure.[74] This view has been exaggerated by comparing the period with the significant growth of the latter half of the twentieth century. Alternatively, British Mormons in the early 1900s responded to these challenges with greater resolve than has been presumed. With persecution frequently having the ironic effect of strengthening identity, Britons had started to

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[72] Typescript, Interview of Frederick Oates,
[73] Typescript of Jessie N. Lloyd interview: Grimsby, 28 July 1986, Oral History, OH 811, Church History Library, Salt Lake City
[74] Evans, p238

define the course of British Mormonism.[75] With this foundation in place, it is possible to see how other factors contributed to the building of British Mormon identity as a unique formation of Mormonism. An examination of the attitudes and perspectives of American missionaries and British members, as well as their relationships, reveal the contrasts between the Mormon experiences and identities. This was made more apparent by shifts in thought towards the central theme of Mormon community, the concept of Zion.

[75] Rasmussen, p35

Chapter Three – British versus American Perspectives

The turn of the twentieth century saw dramatic changes in Mormon theology, policy, and praxis. Emerging from its sanctuary in the Rocky Mountains, the Church looked toward participation in the nation it had withdrawn from. Acceptance meant compliance with American marriage codes, regulated emigration and separation of Church and politics. Yet how these adjustments affected its worldwide membership has been largely unexplored. In Britain, members absorbed the changes by creating a new paradigm of what it meant to be Mormon outside the United States, a religion that could comfortably be placed within the definition of Non-Conformism. Unlike their British Mormon antecedents, early twentieth century converts did not face the pressures of accepting polygamy or emigration. Their belief system had become far more conducive to their home culture.

However, as Britons converted to Mormonism, they were undoubtedly aware of the American character inherent in their new religion. Indeed, Britain was far from independent of the Utah nucleus that continued to provide direction in the form of general leadership, mission presidents who presided over Great Britain, and missionaries who managed local congregations. During a time of great change within the wider Church, a British Mormonism was developing as its resident members made minute modifications as how to incorporate, emulate or reject the American sensibilities and culture of their leaders.

This chapter argues that a British Mormon identity is made apparent by scrutinizing the relationship between and perceptions of American and British Mormons. As these members interacted, they frequently experienced a dissonance of expectations in what characterized a Mormon. This was often evident in differences concerning Mormon practice, social awareness, and worldview. The first part of this chapter utilizes missionary journals and publications to

demonstrate how Americans and British members considered each other to be different. This was evident in their expectations of Mormon behaviour and thought. Part two will explore how the British members viewed themselves in relation to the wider Church. Central to this was how Britons related to the concept of America as "Zion," the Promised Land. Despite believing in the doctrine of an American Zion, Britons were already developing a similar sense of permanence, providence, and community in their own country, eager to take on the initiative of leadership themselves.

Part One

"I listened to what they said, but one I could hardly understand. His American was very American, if you understand what I mean, I couldn't understand him."

Cecil J.Henry Tyrell, interviewed in 1987, Ely England

In 1913 Apostle Hyrum Mack Smith arrived in Liverpool to lead the British Mission. Soon after, Smith noted, "The best saints emigrate as soon as they can which leaves the branches always more or less weak."[76] Smith's remark was telling for many reasons. First, it revealed the expectation that a faithful Mormon would always emigrate. Secondly, it assumed that the British who chose not to emigrate were somehow less faithful. Thirdly, it suggested Smith believed British Mormonism was in constant need of leadership and support from American assignments. Yet, throughout his mission journal, Smith related favorably to the British members, frequently noting the "good fraternal feeling existing among the saints."[77] Indeed, missionaries and British

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[76] Manuscript of Hyrum Mack Smith Journals 1896, 1913-1916, MS 5842, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Oct 18 1913
[77] Manuscript, Smith, 14 Dec 1913

members often established deep lifetime bonds. Yet Smith's attitude was often mirrored by missionaries, who saw the saints as good people, yet unable or unwilling to live as full Latter-day Saints within British society. This section compares American and British Mormon perspectives and expectations, contrasting their differences as a method of elucidating the idiosyncrasies of British Mormonism.

At the center of the American Mormons' perception of the British members was their assessments and criticisms of British society. Freshly arrived missionaries often brought with them a wariness of foreign culture and religion, including preconceived ideas about Britain as a hotbed of Christian corruption. Although they valued Britain for her intellectual and Reformation contributions, they also viewed her as in need of religious enlightenment. They often referred to "Great Britain [as] a standard bearer… a preparation," while "the American Republic… a form of government under which the Church could be established."[78] Some could not resist comparing Utah to "the smokey, dirty, humid atmosphere of England, and her filthy cities and poverty infested streets and alleys."[79] Such expressions of exceptionalism were the result of the limited Mormon worldview and isolation, as well as the effects of long-standing hostility, defamation and exclusion within the United States. One missionary wrote, "[In London is] poverty in its fullest meaning. When I see these conditions, and read of the suffering, bloodshed, and destruction… how thankful I am to my Heavenly Father for what I have, the many blessings of the gospel, and for my beautiful comfortable home in Zion in the tops of the mountains."[80] Yet, out of necessity, British Mormons could generally not entertain such ideas of exclusivity. Their personal and communal survival relied on societal integration and acceptance.

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[78] J. M. S. "Why Preach to Christian?" *Millennial Star,* 28 Jan 1915, p59
[79] Manuscript, Smith, 16 June 1914
[80] Transcript of Rae Stratford Mission Journal 1913-1915, Courtesy of Edna Stratford, http://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWZ8-FZ4, 16 October 1914

An incident in October 1915 demonstrated how the visiting Americans felt disconnected from British society. Disregarding wartime Alien Registration laws, two missionaries were jailed for not registering as Americans at the local police station, while staying at a hotel under false names. Although he severely reprimanded the missionaries for not respecting the law, mission President Smith sympathized with the young elders, claiming they were "treated abominably in jail by the guards [with] clothing taken, scrubbed cells, cursed at, [and] ridiculed. All such treatment was cruel and beyond the demands of justice. That is a sample of English justice."[81] Although Smith was embarrassed by the incident, he was more upset by his claim that other Americans were fined only £3, while they as Mormons were fined £15. Jaded by the frequent persecution they experienced and combined with an expectation of corruption in British law, American Mormons found it difficult to envision the religion being able to take root in Britain. Rather than considering how Mormonism could adapt within British society, missionaries simply "wish[ed] they were all in Zion."[82]

The differences in how British and American Mormons perceived British society were frequently demonstrated in their attitude towards other Christian faiths. Missionaries often expressed distrust and contempt for other ministers, viewing them as the source of persecution and slander. American missionaries viewed their work as directly targeting established Christianity, or the "overthrow of the intricate system of error, tradition and empty forms that have crept into the church and chapels of the world."[83] Yet the British members were far more ecumenical in relationships with their Christian neighbors, despite the intense persecution of the era. British Mormons were acutely aware they were part of a broader Non-Conformist Christian

[81] Manuscript, Smith, 4 November 1915
[82] Manuscript, Smith, 6 September 1915
[83] Ernest E. Greenwood, "Why the Gospel Will Triumph," *Millennial Star,* 15 October 1914, p669

tradition within Britain. They were often inclined to interact with other denominations, primarily because they had often previously been part of those congregations or had immediate family members still involved. George Minns, while known as a Mormon, was also a lay clerk and organist at Ely Cathedral, Cambridgeshire. Minns was known to collaborate with the vicars in genealogical pursuits.[84] Elsie Rickard recalled how her Mormon father was often called on by Catholic neighbors to pray for them. She said, "We were very friendly with the priests. Dad built a temperance bar, priests came in, with all this they got the respect of the district."[85]

How the British members related to other Christian churches was a significant component in the formation of British Mormonism. In contrast to the starkly homogenous religious experiences of American Mormons, British members were likely to connect their beliefs to the Christian traditions familiar to them. Many were attracted to the Church because of similarities with other Christian dogma, or they felt Mormonism was a continuation of Christian evolution. Aubrey Parker wrote to the *Millennial Star* explaining, "I am LDS because my views of religion… prior to becoming a Latter-Day Saint, were synonymous to those held and taught by this Church."[86] Consequently, many brought traditions with them, especially the use of the Bible, Christian hymnody, and recitation of doxologies. Cecil Tyrell related that "I had the Book of Mormon given to me, but I never read it. I was converted… by the gospel in the Bible."[87] Some British members saw their conversion as a development of their existing Christian faith within an existing Christian culture, rather than a radical sect from Western America.

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[84] Typescript of Cecil J. Henry Tyrell Interview: Ely, England, 21 July 1987, Oral History, OH 912, Microfilm, Church History Library, Salt Lake City

[85] Typescript of Church Educational System Oral History Project Elsie Rickard Interview: Wigan, England, 13 Aug 1986, Church Educational System (1970-) Area Administration (British Isles), Corporate Records, CR 88485, Church History Library, Salt Lake City

[86] Audrey Parker, "A Testimony from Zion," *Millennial Star,* 17 Sep 1914, p608

[87] Typescript, Cecil J. Henry Tyrell

British members also felt a pressing need to conform the public image of Mormonism to British society. By emphasizing commonalities with other Christian churches, they recreated an image that would allow them to co-exist peacefully with their countrymen. In their sermons and publications, British Mormons tended to focus on themes familiar with other Christians, such as priesthood lines of authority, Bible teachings and conversion stories. Acutely aware of their precarious situation, British Mormons aimed to reframe their religion in the safe space of non-Conformism.

A significant demonstration of how the British members viewed Mormonism as existing within the familiar framework of accepted Christianity centered around the court case of William Hawkes. Claiming exemption from military service on the grounds of being a branch president, Hawkes and his fellow saints argued he should be treated as an ordinary Christian minister. Initially, the court decided Hawkes was not exempt as "the members in Great Britain were not really belonging to the Church, this being only a 'mission', that the 'real' Church was in America."[88] Members retorted this decision by claiming, "If it be said that [the Church] is an alien organization, that is not true, as far as the British members are concerned… Our Church is not an alien organization here any more than is the Roman Catholic Church… It is just as British as any other church established among British subjects."[89] After weeks of consternation between magistrates and courts, the final jurisdiction favored Hawkes. British members viewed this as a triumph of Mormonism in Britain, existing not as an appendage to Utah, but as a legitimate, self-reliant component of the Church.

Consequently, the cosmopolitan interaction of British members with other Christian faiths often frustrated the provincial American missionaries. Accustomed to presenting

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[88] "The Hawkes Case, *Millennial Star,* 10 May 1917, p300
[89] J. M. S. "The Hawkes Case," *Millennial Star,* 10 May 1917, p313

Mormonism as an essential departure from the corruption of Christendom, missionaries viewed these connections as uncharacteristic of conventional Mormonism. Elder Lewis Merrill wrote in his journal, "Brother Winch wants to know if it will be ok for him to preach at the Wesleyan chapel when they call on him. He has been going there… he has no business going there as he does not attend our meetings even."[90] Elder Stratford was surprised to find one member attending her village Sunday School class as well as missionary services.[91] Thus while missionaries were often suspicious of inter-faith relations, British Mormons saw these similarities as a way of establishing the church in their communities.

Confused at the attitudes and practices of British Mormons, missionaries were often preoccupied with noticing the differences between themselves and British members. This was usually innocent observations that amused the foreigner, such as Elder Merrill, who was asked "why Americans couldn't joke without lying, [like] the English did."[92] Yet other differences concerned the missionaries. Elder Rae Stratford wrote of a Brother Whitelock, as a "real socialist, just as Brother Downs… believes the working man has always had the hard 'dirty' end of the job, that the capitalists are traitors, inhuman, rascal etc."[93] Consequently, Stratford described Bro Whitelock as "lukewarm" in his membership, despite having "had experiences with the elders for 45 years", and even "[pawning] his clothes to feed the elders etc." For Stratford, Whitelock's affiliation with socialism and casualness to "attend to his duties," questioned his credibility as Mormon despite his long Church service and affiliation.

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[90] Manuscript of Lewis B Merrill Mission Journal 1914-1915, Merrill Lewis Bigler 1887-1937, MS 30974, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, 12 January 1915
[91] Transcript, Stratford, 12 January 1915
[92] Manuscript, Merrill, 27 January 1915
[93] Transcript, Stratford, 16 October 1915

Differences also frequently arose surrounding the issue of members marrying outside of Mormonism. Missionaries were perturbed when British members seemed indifferent to finding a partner within the religion. Many noted incidents where a Mormon woman desired their newborn to be blessed by a missionary only to be opposed by the father. One wrote on "the mistake of our girls marrying out of the church. Nothing but sorrow and trouble follows as long as the girl's desires to be true to her religion."[94] While some women agreed to never marry outside the faith, others did not see this cultural expectation as realistic, considering the implication of remaining single. Doreen Green pragmatically reminisced, "In those days there were few people to marry in the Church around here, and so of course she'd marry out of the Church."[95] Yet this decision did frequently cause conflict within marriages. Kathleen Holyroyd recalls her dad walking around Halifax with the placard "Wife Joins the Mormon Church – Husband Objects."[96] Yet despite the differences in perspective, many individuals believed they could practice Mormonism faithfully without support from their spouse. Therefore, British Mormons frequently identified as life-long individual adherents, rather than part of familial groups of believers that were common of the American experience.

The disparities between the members and leaders were not lost on the British. As local brethren took control during the war, they occasionally expressed relief over losing American leadership. Some felt free to vent about "Elders [who] have not always been wise in their treatments of the members".[97] One contributor wrote, "The Latter-Day Saints are true saints, here

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[94] Manuscript, Smith, 29 August 1915
[95] Typescript of Grace D. Green Interview: Leicester, England, 23 July 1987, Oral History, OH 856, FILMING 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City
[96] Typescript of Church Educational System Oral History Project: Frank and Kathleen Holyroyd Interview, 8 October 1986, Church Educational System (1970-) Area Administration (British Isles), Corporate Records, CR 884 35, Church History Library, Salt Lake City
[97] "A Convention of Conference Presidents," *Millennial Star,* 7 Sep 1916, p567

as elsewhere. A few elders have been indiscreet and hard to handle. The saints have learned to love them."[98] Members sometimes felt over-prescribed by American dictates or annoyed by their attitudes, especially concerning Church responsibilities. Interviews of British saints explain how they saw their activity as necessarily flexible. With so many social pressures and difficulties in attending, non-participation for years was not necessarily seen as unfaithful, even though missionaries constantly dismayed at members who "neglected their duties."[99] British members felt they did what they could depending on circumstances, expressing satisfaction when baptism rates increased during the war under their leadership.

A distinct British Mormon identity was further formed as differences in worldview between the British and American members were made apparent during the First World War. Before the United States joined the conflict, Utah and mission leaders advocated strong American political views combined with Mormon exceptionalism. Missionary journals and editorials eagerly condemned "wars… as a result of false religious conception and sinful practices."[100] They frequently claimed neutrality or indifference towards the conflict, arguing it was "ridiculous how they [Britons] claimed all the credit for themselves and said France and Belgium and Russia were no use."[101] The young male missionaries made efforts to separate themselves from the conflict, affronted when questioned by strangers about not being in the army.[102] In the *Millennial Star*, Elder Frederick Lamb exultantly declared, "while nearly all the nations of the earth are at war, peace abounds in the U.S. The rulers have not bound themselves to share in this upheaval. The American nation is being blessed, and it is by the influence left by

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[98] "A Convention of Conference Presidents," *Millennial Star,* 21 Sep 1916, p596
[99] "A Convention of Conference Presidents," 7 Sep 1916, p563
[100] J. M. S., "Prayer for Peace," *Millennial star,* 25 February 1915, p120
[101] Manuscript, Merrill, 20 January 1915
[102] Ibid.

such men as President James Garfield of the U.S. government and President Joseph F. Smith, that the hand of God is seen."[103] The Mormon Americans in Britain typically saw the war as evidence of Old-World corruption and the fulfillment of prophecy, the fallout of which they as citizens of Zion were exempt.

British members on the other hand, saw no conflict of interest in being invested in the war effort.[104] Hundreds of Mormon men served in the army, while women supported the factories and home front. Yet their patriotism went beyond the Church's directive to "be loyal to the respective government under which they live."[105] While one Elder wrote, "In the land of Zion alone is there escape from the iron grasp of military servitude," British Mormon boys eagerly enlisted.[106] A deep nationalism often accompanied the Mormon soldiers, reflecting typical anti-German mentalities of the day, one even defending "the humane principles that govern British warfare."[107] Furthermore, many soldiers promoted British Mormon exceptionalism, claiming providential protection whilst in the warzone. Brother W. Duckworth of Burnley wrote, "I know that up to now, both myself and Brother Holgate have been under the care of the Lord, for we have seen shells burst, and bullets flying all around us, and it has been a miracle how we have escaped."[108] For the British Mormon soldiers who served "King and Country", including the 60-70 that were killed, there was no contradiction in being both patriotic and Mormon. The result was a religious identity that was informed and strengthened by strong British patriotism and loyalty to local congregations.

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[103] Frederick Lamb, "The Hand of God," *Millennial Star,* 21 January 1915, p46
[104] The attitude of Church leaders drastically changed during the course of the war, in line with mainstream American thought. Although President Joseph F. Smith did not personally endorse the war, other general authorities promoted involvement through providing soldiers and relief.
[105] J. M. S. "A Message of Peace," *Millennial Star,* 15 oct 1914, 664
[106] William Derbyshire, "To Those Who Seek for a Sign," *Millennial Star,* 20 May 1915, p311
[107] "A Letter from The Front," *Millennial Star,* Sep 23 1915, p607
[108] Ibid., p607

In their letters from the frontline, British Mormon soldiers offer insight into how British Mormonism was developing primarily as a local experience. Many individuals wrote to the *Millennial Star* identifying a deep connection to the saints from their branches, not mentioning the Church as a whole. From "Somewhere in France," Harold E McKnight wrote, "My thoughts go back to many a Christmas that I have spent in your company… How my heart is longing for the good old times and companionship with the saints! For such love and goodwill as exist among the saints, I have found nowhere else."[109] Wilfred Craven similarly expressed the hope "that I may be kept safe and sound, so that I can return to my own little branch at Clayton… and help to roll on the great and glorious work."[110] For these and other soldiers, Mormonism represented both a comfort felt through deep relationships with other British members, as well as a mandate to minister at home in their own society.

The perceived differences of the British members occasionally caused concern for the American leadership of the British mission. Unable to relate to how Mormonism could be fully practiced outside of the Intermountain West, a concerted effort was made to control how Mormons should behave. At a Conference of mainly American local leadership, President Hyrum Mack Smith explained a need to refine the British Church membership in order to preserve its integrity. He called for "action… taken against those guilty of wrongdoing. If they will not repent, they should be cut off. We cannot have that class of members."[111] Another leader expressed belief that "there were others who should not have their names in the books."[112] Smith's anxiety towards the character of British membership resulted in repeated "remarks to the

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[109] Harold E. McKnight, "A Letter from Harold E. McKnight," *Millennial Star,* 10 January 1918 MS, p23
[110] "A Letter from a Brother in Belgium," *Millennial Star,* January 17th 1918, p61
[111] "A Convention of Conference Presidents," *Millennial Star,* 7 Sep 1916, p563
[112] Ibid., p564

saints [concerning] the manner of men and women we should be."[113] The difficulties of regulating Mormonism in Britain, especially under local leadership, provoked the mission leadership to promote a paradigm of Mormon orthodoxy. To clarify what British Mormonism should look like, Smith's successor mission President George F. Richards developed a rubric by which a faithful member could be ascertained. Sabbath observance, payment of tithing, obeying the Word of Wisdom and reading the Millennial Star were used as key indicators of genuine adherence to Mormonism.[114] Members were interviewed based on their obedience to these issues, making it easier for the mission president to measure fidelity of local British leadership in an unfamiliar culture.[115] Positive responses to these questions had the effect of reassuring the mission President that, despite the differences, local leadership could be placed in capable hands.

Despite his preconceived ideas about the mission he was assigned to lead, Hyrum Mack Smith wrote affectionately of the saints he interacted with during his three-year tenure. Still, the cultural and social differences between British Mormons and American visitors perplexed him and his missionaries. Distrust of British society created an anxiety for "the saints to be pure and keep themselves aloof and free from the sins and evil practices of the world."[116] The First World War accentuated this gap, forcing American Mormons to confront these disparities as they handed over leadership to the British members. Their perspectives have contributed to the historical assumption that the early twentieth century British Church lacked persona, substance, and direction. However, evidence suggests that not only were British members heavily invested in their religion, but they were also sensitive to how Mormonism needed to pragmatically adapt

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[113] Manuscript, Smith, 3 November 1913
[114] The Word of Wisdom is a health code that requires abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee. See Doctrine and Covenants section 89 for more information.
[115] J. M. S. "Questions and Answers," Millennial Star, 10 August 1916, p506
[116] Manuscript, Smith, 16 May 1915

to fit into British society. They did not see their differences as problematic to Mormon progress, but rather beneficial, especially their familiarity with other Christian churches. The next section argues that the evolution of British Mormonism also required its members to reconfigure the very meaning and application of the traditional concept of Zion.

Part Two

> *For God remembers still His promise made of old*
> *That he on Zion's hill, Truth's standard would unfold*
> *Her light should there attract the gaze*
> *Of all the world in Latter-Days.*[117]

In his book *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-Day Saints 1890-1930* (1986), Thomas Alexander explains that at the turn of the century, the acceptance of the Church in British society required a fundamental change in public perception as a reputable Christian sect. While the populace continued to question the Church's morality and encouragement of emigration, conversion would be small.[118] Alexander further argues that growth stagnated precisely because its members were unable to make this change. Their yearning to be a part of the American base in Utah inhibited the development of the Church in Britain. Alexander's claim infers that, by continuing to refer to Utah as "Zion," members stalled the internationalization of the Church and potential growth in Britain until the 1960s, when the

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[117] Joel H. Johnson, "High on a Mountain Top," *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,* (Salt Lake City, 1985), p5
[118] Thomas Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-Day Saints 1890-1930,* (Illinois, 1986), P237

previously exclusive term of Zion officially extended its meaning to anywhere in the world the Church is established.

The development of British Mormonism has been misunderstood because the concept of "Zion" in the Mormon lexicon had not historically evolved from a United States centric perspective in the early twentieth century. The persistent reference of the United States as Zion caused the presumption that British members were distracted for decades by a longing to emigrate, infused with the enduring theology of "gathering." Alexander's perspective has overlooked how Mormonism was evolving within Britain. Certainly, Mormons rarely referred to Utah by its state name, whilst missionaries continually and frequently successfully encouraged emigration. War time mission President Hyrum Mack Smith's journal shows a preoccupation with organizing emigration parties, even taking personal responsibility over numerous families daring the sea voyage, praying "that the Lord will take care of them"[119] However, this section argues that even though the theology and culture surrounding an American Zion continued, Britons were simultaneously developing the concept of Zion as a broader definition, taking the term to mean any place the Church had settled and thrived. Britain was becoming an extension of Zion long before the London temple ground was broken in 1955.

The premise surrounding the historiography of British Mormonism is that its members longed to emigrate, even up to the 1960s.[120] Yet ample evidence indicates that Britons were less fixated with travelling to the United States than has been suggested and were considering how they would develop Mormonism in their own country and what it would look like. Although many members still emigrated, this was often in response to the difficulties associated with the

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[119] Manuscript, Smith, 13 august 1915
[120] Milton V. Backman Jr., 'The Birth of Mormonism in America and England,' *Regional Studies in Latter-Day Saint Church History,* (Provo, 1990), pp129-130

war and persecution rather than a continuation of nineteenth century gathering theology.[121]

Members did not necessarily feel a spiritual obligation to emigrate, such as Doris Gregson's

father who studied at Brigham Young University in 1907, only to then return to England to raise

his family in a tiny branch.[122] Familial connections with non-members also often discouraged

individuals to emigrate, such as Grace Lilian Parker Dimmock, who was asked by an Elder to

marry and emigrate, but "said she'd rather stay with her parents."[123] Cecil Tyrell demonstrated

how patriotism also inhibited emigration, recalling "I [couldn't] do that. I like this country so

much I [couldn't] do that," while Elsie Rickard had a practical approach, explaining that to stay

in England was "cheaper on her pension."[124] Finally, Vera Smith's story demonstrates how

members viewed the Church in Britain as viable and permanent. A lifelong member, Smith

explained, "Having parents in the Gospel at home meant [I] wasn't tempted to emigrate… Mum

said, "I know we could live the gospel here, without going there, and I wasn't going to go.""[125]

Death announcements in the *Millennial Star* also reveal that many British members had

decided against emigration, only to remain faithful members in Britain for decades. For example,

on 17 December 1914, George Adams, aged 89, died a "faithful Latter-Day Saint," having been

a member since 1850.[126] Yet significantly, in the early twentieth century, these veterans were

seen by British members as objects of celebration. Resisting the temptation to escape to Zion,

working hard to grow the Church in Britain had become a theme of admiration. In 1915, Henry

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[121] Manuscript, Merrill, 3 February 1915
[122] Typescript, Lawrence and Doris Gregson
[123] Typescript of Grace Lilian Parker Dimmock Interview: Leicester, England, 22 July 1987, Oral History, OH 887, Microfilm, FILMING 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City
[124] Typescript, Elsie Rickard
[125] Typescript of Church Educational System Oral History Project: Vera Annie Smith Interview Sheffield England, 1986, Church Educational System (1970-) Area Administration (British Isles), Corporate Records, CR 88476, Church History Library, Salt Lake City
[126] "Died," *Millennial Star,* 17 December 1914, p816

O'Gorman was presented with a surprise party and ebony and gold cane in honor of his 31 years of branch service.[127] One article commended Ann Sophia and Charles Rosser, who had married in 1851 and "lived the lives of Latter-Day Saints until death called them to part… in 1909… They converted 12 people."[128]

The enthusiasm shown towards older members for their service and sacrifice was intensified as more opportunities to lead appeared during the Great War. Some members watched with anticipation as the American missionary force was depleted from 300 to 50 by 1916. One spoke how, "local brethren who have been held back for lack of opportunity, are now laboring diligently."[129] In a similar tone, Jonathan Hunt of Newcastle recounted, "[We have] overcome difficulties caused by some elders… though the missionary force is reduced, just as much is accomplished as a when there were more elders in the conference… Local brethren and sisters now do it."[130] Britons often relished in promoting any success as of their own making, and in spite of missionaries leaving. In a more harmonious tone, but explicit nonetheless, one noted, "A great reformation had taken place in those who hold the priesthood… Many are poor… [yet] splendid results are obtained by letting the local brethren do the work."[131] Although missionaries were considered like family, many Britons expressed appreciation at being given the task to lead Church functions in their own land. The responses demonstrate how while members and missionaries had successfully long worked together, there had been a measure of resentment on the part of British members.

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[127] Manuscript, Smith, 6 October 1915
[128] Elmer B. Edwards, "A Faithful Sister," *Millennial Star,* 4 May 1916, p278
[129] "A Convention of Conference Presidents," *Millennial Star,* 7 Sep 1916, p578
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid., p580

With the depletion of American missionaries, British Mormonism was significantly affected by the change to British leadership during the First World War. Members promoted the Church to their friends as a local center of worship, that would address local interests and needs. Meetings were frequently attended by up to fifty percent non-members. The saints organized harvest festivals, picnics, concerts and even boxing matches, activities they felt they could comfortably invite friends to. However, the removal of American missionaries sometimes blurred leadership lines, resulting in bickering and disunity. Alice Shelley recalls how some members stopped attending as they preferred the American ways of doing things.[132] However, many members felt that improved publicity, social relations, the increase of baptism rates, tithing donations and attendance were the result of local efforts and leadership.

While the modifications in leadership were crucial in the formation of British Mormonism, the most significant influence was an adaption of the definition and theology of Zion. At first, these developments were subtle, such as appeared in an editorial referring to Utah as "the central stake of Zion."[133] Although seemingly insignificant, this remark insinuates that Mormons had started to consider the geographical location of Zion to be capable of expansion and development. From a distance, British members looked on events in the global church that verified the idea of Zion as a flexible entity. On 19 September 1915, the cornerstone was laid for the Cardston Alberta Temple, the "first to be built outside the United States."[134] The implication of this move cannot be underestimated, a significance that would not have been lost on the British saints. Temples were the ultimate symbol of Zion, the epicenter of worship and

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[132] Typescript of Church Educational System Oral History Project: Alice M. Shelley Interview, Ipswich, England, 1986, Church Educational System (1970-) Area Administration (British Isles), Corporate Records, CR 884 82, Microfilm, FILMING 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City
[133] J. M. S. "The Gospel of Jesus Christ," *Millennial Star,* 22 October 1914, p675
[134] J. M. S. "Cornerstone of the Cardston Temple," *Millennial Star,* 21 Oct 1915 p662

community. An expansion of temple location invariably suggested an extension of the boundaries of Zion. The editorial covering the event reminded the Britons that "other [temples] will follow in the due time of the Lord. The prophet Joseph Smith is said to have predicted that a time will come when temples will adorn many of the places in the world which the Latter-Day Saints are gathered, and this is reasonable."[135] Britons would have noted the descriptions of the ceremony, "where floated the Union Jack" while crowds shouted, "God bless the temple! God bless the Church!... God bless all people! God bless Canada! God bless the British Empire!... God Save the King!"[136] With a temple already forming on empirical soil, British saints could radically transform their understanding of where and what Zion could be. Long before the London Temple was finally built in 1958, Britons imagined what a British Zion would look like and how they would create it. With the increased autonomy handed over by war-time necessity, British members took control of the advancement of their religion in their own land.

British development of the concept of Zion is reflected in the language members used to describe themselves and communities. Mormon scripture describes Zion as a place of "one heart and one mind", where the saints of God dwell in peace and unity.[137] One *Star* contributor noted, "The [British] Latter-Day Saints are one, and as long as they are sound in the faith… It is natural for them to flock together."[138] Yet the British members did not just see themselves as a close-knit group. They identified themselves as a pseudo-Zion, paralleled with Mormon communities in the United States. On June 24th 1915, Hilda Payne from Leeds hypothesized on the meaning of Zion in the *Millennial Star*. She wrote, "How can I lighten the burdens of the world?... The present war… [gives] one a stronger will to help bring people into the fold of Christ, for is it not

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[135] Ibid.,
[136] Ibid., p661
[137] *The Book of Mormon,* 4 Nephi 1 (1981 edition)
[138] J. M. S. "Our Meetings," *Millennial Star* 22 Oct 1914, p681

prophesy being fulfilled? Naturally one is reminded of the glorious hymn, "High on a Mountain

Top."[139] By referring to this well-known song, Payne is connecting the work of the British Saints

to the divine call of those that reside in Zion. Verse two recalls,

> *"For God remembers still His promise made of old*
> *That he on Zion's hill, Truth's standard would unfold*
> *Her light should there attract the gaze*
> *Of all the world in Latter-Days."[140]*

As early as 1915 Payne articulated the idea that would grow substantially after WWII, that Zion

was not just where Church headquarters or temples were, but where any saints worked in unity to

grow the Church.

Throughout the war, the *Millennial Star*, which previously incorporated instructions on

emigration, now increasingly urged British members to focus on building the Church in Britain.

Although many members did still make the voyage across the Atlantic, a parallel message rang

clear, to "forge ahead, ye saints of god! Do not spend your time dreaming of Zion; just where

you find yourselves is the place where the Lord would have you be."[141] A change of perspective

was also demonstrated by the longing for permanent buildings to use as chapels. Owning only a

few buildings throughout Britain, members were used to renting flats, offices, halls, and

workshops. Yet Isabella Blake's vision of "a little church here of our own, that could be kept for

the sole purpose of worshipping God in, and performing baptisms," speaks volumes of how the

members saw Mormonism as a permanent feature within their society.[142] The purchase of an old

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[139] Hilda Payne, "Faith, Interest, Opportunity," *Millennial Star,* 24 June 1915, p396
[140] Johnson*, Hymns*, p5
[141] Mollie Higginson, "A Thought From Zion," *Millennial Star,* 19 October 1916, p660
[142] Isabella Blake, "Interesting Items From Glasgow, *Millennial Star,* 2 Nov 1916, p727

mechanic's garage created a feeling of unity, pride and permanence among the members as they cleaned and repaired it together to use as a chapel.[143]

Changes in the perception of Zion were directly related to how British members viewed their role within the Church. Some soldiers expressed deep transformative experiences whist in the warzone that altered the perspective of their discipleship and identity as a Mormon in Britain. Frederick Oates related in the 1980s how his father prayed in the trenches that "if Heavenly Father would just spare him, he was going to give his time and energy in service to the Lord."[144] Many others wrote to the *Millennial Star* expressing the belief that their time in the trenches was a divine mandate to teach people the gospel. They often felt it was an opportunity to improve public image and relations among British comrades, as well as teach the gospel. G. E. Gent wrote how one of his army companions had been part of the Sunderland anti-Mormon riot but, had become "friends and comrades on active service somewhere in Russia… we are sharing the hardships on active service together."[145] With a British temple a future possibility, British Mormons were proactively bringing Zion to their homeland.

As British members configured how Mormonism could exist in their society, they were eroding the tenet of gathering, a pillar that had been a hallmark of their religion for seventy years. However, this is not to suggest Britons wished to deviate from the orthodoxy of the main Mormon Church, or that they did not still consider Zion to mean the western hemisphere. Indeed, British Mormons talked of Utah as Zion and willingly applied directives from Utah, including the Word of Wisdom, a move that went completely against British social norms, especially the

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[143] Typescript, Oats
[144] Ibid.
[145] G. E. Gent, "A Soldier's Testimony," *Millennial Star,* 12 Dec 1918, p814

consumption of tea.[146] Many viewed themselves as the epitome of commitment to the American Church, even when finances and other obligations rendered them unable to attend meetings. Consequently, some felt unable to accommodate demarcated expectations that were not conducive to their culture. One wrote, "The saints have a hard time to hold to the 'iron rod' in this environment. It really is miserable for them to be 'Mormon' among those who were their dearest friends."[147]

British Mormonism did not develop as a departure from the mainstream Church, but as its own type of Mormon exceptionalism that reflected British sensibilities and Christian culture. Britons chose to promote their religion as one that was in harmony with society, not a denigration of it. The withdrawal of Americans infused British members with opportunity and the self-belief to lead. British Mormons had begun to adapt their understanding of the concept of Zion to include members outside the United States. The final chapter of this thesis looks closer at how British Mormon identity evolved in the early twentieth century by members stipulating appropriate moral behavior, especially the Word of Wisdom, while using the war to further integrate their religion into British society and culture. Participation in the war effort drew members closer to British society, driving them to combine their patriotism with a sense of duty to grow Mormonism in Britain. The work of female British Mormons within the Church and on the home-front helped to shape British Mormonism as a homegrown group of believers.

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[146] By 1920, over half of the world's tea was consumed in Britain alone. Source https://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-history-of-the-international-tea-market-1850-1945/ More details on the Word of Wisdom are given in chapter four.
[147] Benjamin F. Hulme, "How to Teach the Saints," *Millennial Star,* 25 March 1916, p630

Chapter Four – Patriotism and Peculiarity

There is something peculiar about a man that does not smoke, drink tea or alcoholic liquors, or swear, and many seem to regard me as a harmless sort of lunatic.
Sidney B. Smith, British Expeditionary Force, France[148]

In the early twentieth century, Mormonism in Britain was affected by substantial changes within the main Church, specifically the demise of polygamy and the slowing of emigration. These developments provoked profound adjustments in Mormon theology as well as policy, notably the ideas surrounding the concept of Zion. The demise of emigration especially propelled Britons to reconsider their identity as members of an American church in their own society. Facing a new status quo and encouraged by perceived cultural differences with the traditional American visiting leadership, Britons began to view Mormonism less as an apocalyptic sect hidden in the Rocky Mountains, than a viable Christian faith that could exist within their own communities.

The process of establishing a British Mormonism required the members to integrate the Church into British society, whilst retaining a Mormon character at the center. They achieved this by promoting their religion through the British war effort and subscribing to a strict moral code that was being heavily propagandized by the central Church. This chapter explains how Britons formed their Mormon identity through subscribed moral behavior, observing the Word of Wisdom, proselytizing, creating tight-knit communities and building connections with British society through war work. Through such actions, they believed they could both confirm their status as orthodox members within the American Church, while simultaneously rooting Mormonism into British society. At the heart of this process were the contributions of women as

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[148] "Mormons in the War," *Millennial Star,* 29 August 1918, p547

the preservers of Mormon congregations and the driving force behind involvement in the war effort.

Matthew Bowman argues that after the demise of polygamy, "moral rectitude and the cultivation of personal character" became Mormonism's new theology.[149] To be Mormon no longer required acceptance of controversial marriage practices or a trek to the Salt Lake Valley. Bowman continues, "It allowed Mormons to recenter the boundaries of their sacred world from the community of Zion to the strict codes that governed their own lives and undergirded the continuing development of a distinctively Mormon devotional life that emphasized worship as a form of education and stressed adherence to a strict behavioral code."[150] Bowman's argument is highly relevant to the development of British Mormonism. As he suggests, Britons focused on behavior rather than location, thus creating a new meaning of what it meant to be Mormon, one that could potentially exist anywhere in the world. Through a recontextualization of Mormonism as a religion of practical application, members were able to relate their faith to their own space and context.

During the First World War, approximately 8,000 Mormons in Britain developed their religious identity by emphasizing the application of Mormon religious and moral principles. Often isolated from other members as well as the main American body, Britons found they could practice Mormonism as "an individual matter," wherever they lived.[151] Sylvia Whalley recalled how her grandmother's illness prevented her from church attendance, yet she was "still very deeply involved spiritually with things… they believed that you understood and that you

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[149] Bowman, *The Mormon People,* p498
[150] Ibid., p503
[151] Mollie Higginson, "A Greeting from Zion," *Millennial Star,* 15 March 1917, p162

knew."[152] Without emigrating, attending a temple, or when obstructions arose, members could "by the practice of these principles…meet all the requirements [to] obtain salvation."[153]

Mormonism started to grow roots in Britain because it shifted its focus from apocalyptical teachings to pursuing a "religion… [that is] honorable in business pursuits [and] loyal to our country," while finding "ways to develop our characters, so that those we associate with may gain a great respect for us."[154] This reconfiguring of Mormon teachings suited the members who were recovering from a period of intense persecution. Having been persistently accused of immorality, even threatening the very foundation of British society, British Mormons were keen to become the very model of clean Christian living. Many felt the greatest defense against calumny was to be scrupulously moral, "[illustrating] the grand principles of the gospel in their daily lives."[155]

The First World War provided an ideal situation for the development of a "living religion" theology to be adopted in Britain. The instabilities and religious friction caused by the Great War encouraged members to see their religious practices as the answer to the problems within society. One *Star* editorial noted, "The faith which the world so designates is eminently a practical religion. It is a religion brought to bear on business, on social relations, [and] on politics… the means by which the world will be saved from all the evils that now cling to it."[156] Mormons felt that a focus on moral living gave an individual a sense of control during volatile times, including Mormon soldiers who believed they would have increased divine protection if they lived high standards. With death and disease surrounding them, members found respite in

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152 Typescript of Sylvia M. Whalley Interview: Ashton-Under-Lyme, England, 24 July 1987, Oral History, OH 879, Church History Library, Salt Lake City
153 Leroy S. Dickson, "Minutes of the Nottingham Conference," *Millennial Star,* 8 November 1917, p718
154 Rachel Cory, "Some of the Duties of Saints," *Millennial Star,* 1 February 1917, p78
155 "Minutes of the London Conference, *Millennial Star,* 23 September 1915, p613
156 J. M. S. "War Stories and Thoughts Suggested," *Millennial Star,* 21 March 1918, p185

"Mormonism [as] the greatest religious system in existence, because it gives the most adequate solution to the problems of life."[157] George F. Long wrote how he survived an air raid in which his roof was blown off, the ceiling collapsed, and the windows smashed. He attributed his escape to keeping "commandments of promise," advising "it pays to serve God."[158] British Mormonism developed as a religion of praxis precisely because members felt they could regulate their public image while providing antidotes for the overpowering turbulence of the time.

British Mormons found it easier to integrate their religion into their society by emphasizing teachings based on its daily application. However, Mormonism equally required its members to remain distinct, unique, and separate, even as they attempted to amalgamate. The way this proved most effective was to emphasize the Mormon health code, the Word of Wisdom, as a common demarcation of Mormon membership. Although Mormon principles of health had been around since 1833, they were generally regarded as advice rather than requirement, taking more than 70 years to be officially codified as an expression of orthodoxy. The twentieth century saw a stark increase of the practice throughout the Church, including Britain. President Joseph F. Smith, having led the Church through its days of difficult transition, brought attention to his strong advocacy of prohibition. Smith saw many of the world's problems caused by alcohol and tobacco consumption, as well as tea and coffee. Abstention from these substances became the hallmark of British Mormon exceptionalism, a method of differentiating Mormons from society even as they were forced to remain a part of it.

Many British Mormons responded enthusiastically to obeying the Word of Wisdom despite, and seemingly because of, the great incongruity with British society. By observing the principles, members created a visible and mental way to separate themselves from other

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[157] Jessie D. Barlow, "Minutes of the Bristol Conference," *Millennial Star,* 8 October 1914, p646
[158] "In the Air Raid Areas," *Millennial Star,* 8 November 1917, p711

Christians and Britons, while allowing them more control over their public image that was still largely based on tales of elders kidnapping women. During the war, members consistently wrote about their thoughts, struggles and testimonies based on abstaining from tea, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco. Mollie Higginson wrote to the Saints, "If there is a saint with a teapot in her possession, take it into the backyard and smash it, then pick up the pieces and put them in a conspicuous place: let them stand as a witness to your determination to crush the power of the author of sin."[159] Elizabeth Downing wrote an article explaining how she became "convinced that her sufferings had been aggravated by the constant use of tea and brandy."[160] She encouraged other members to make the Word of Wisdom a "subject of prayer, if they have not already received a testimony of its truth."[161] Britons were eager in their observance of the Word of Wisdom largely because of its implication as absurd in British society. Its practice rendered them peculiar, different, and therefore, exceptional.

In many ways, British Mormons were mirroring attitudes demonstrated by their American associates. Although they expressed a strong patriotism and British identity, British members viewed society in drastic need of enlightenment. They believed Mormonism taught a morality and benefit other Christian churches lacked, arguing that "a good test of a man's religion was its utility."[162] Yet they also viewed their situation as different from American Mormons. Unlike the residents of the American Zion, they had been given the mandate to be part of society, yet with the charge to remain "unspotted from the world."[163] Infused with purpose, British Mormons felt the heavy responsibility to guide British society out of corruption into the

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[159] Mollie Higgingson, "A Greeting From Zion," *Millennial Star,* 15 March 1917, p162
[160] Elizabeth Downing, "A Warning Heeded," *Millennial Star,* 27 June 1918, p406
[161] Ibid., p407
[162] "Religion of Daily Life," *Millennial Star,* 8 November 1917, p705
[163] Leroy S. Dickson, "Minutes of the Bristol Conference," *Millennial Star,* 8 November 1917, p718

light, while "[keeping themselves] pure in British society."[164] Rachel Cory of Halifax wrote,

"When much is given, much is required, and there are no people on the earth that have more light

and more blessings than we."[165] President Hyrum Smith reminded the British members that

through their actions they were, "The moral standard, the ensign to the nations… [this]

constituted the Latter-Day Saints a peculiar people."[166] British Mormon identity, like their

American counterparts, was based on the belief the members could improve society by living

lives that demonstrated enlightened Christian behavior.

The extent to which British members used the Word of Wisdom to define their Mormon

identity is apparent in the way it alienated others in the process. These members were often

considered saints "in name only," after missionaries failed in their attempts to encourage an

adoption of the principle.[167] In the March 1918 Irish conference, Benjamin R. Birchall preached,

"The commandments of God are [like] links of a chain. If any of the links [are] broken, the

breakage occurs where a flaw exists. The Word of Wisdom is the weak link for many of the

members of the Church."[168] Missionaries used the Word of Wisdom as an indicator of

faithfulness, even though some saints were more worried about the social implication of

abstaining from tea, such as being seen as cruel by giving their children cold water.[169] However,

there were other members that did not conflate their Mormon identity with obedience to the

health code. The American president of the London conference discovered through interviews

with British male local leaders that 24% of them did not observe the Word of Wisdom.[170]

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[164] Annie Gallacher, "Relief Society Gatherings," *Millennial star,* 17 August 1916, p524
[165] Cory, "Duties," p78
[166] Hyrum M. Smith, "Light After Darkness," *Millennial Star,* 15 August 1918, p525
[167] "A Convention of Conference Presidents," *Millennial star,* 7 September 1916, p564
[168] "Minutes of the Irish Conference," Millennial Star, 4 April 1918, p219
[169] "A Convention of Conference Presidents," p565
[170] J. M. S. "Questions and Answers," *Millennial Star,* 10 August 1916, p506

Even though there were mixed responses to the Word of Wisdom, many accepted it as an integral part of orthodox Mormon practice. The urgency felt by British Mormons to be religiously and morally distinct in British society was equaled by the need create a support system and sense of community among them. In 1978, Peter Morley quoted Liverpool Stake President Michael R. Otterson, who claimed that before a temple was built in Britain, the "pride and kinship which [members] felt for the Church was taken to the Salt Lake Valley, never properly developing in the British Church."[171] This suggests that while lacking a viable support network, British Mormons were often unable to harmonize their faith to British society. Indeed, as British saints were usually sole members within workplaces, schools, communities and even families, it would be natural to presume they lacked a cohesive identity and community. Small branches often covered vast areas with poor or expensive transport networks. Yet despite their isolation, British saints forged bonds that impressed the American leaders and missionaries, as well as imprinting on the memories of the young Mormons. Elder Rae Stratford recorded, "There is only a small number of saints in the Stratford Branch but there is a love, unity and harmony as I have never seen before in a branch."[172] Many recalled "glorious" picnics, concerts, and rambles, with Sunday meetings usually including a potluck lunch. Soldiers wrote how they often thought of their branch, while the members raised money to send them luxuries. Many expressed the deep familial-like bonds as a symbol of their membership of the Church in Britain.

Tight-knit Mormon communities sustained the confidence of members to live their religion as a minority. Even as converts became ostracized, they entered a society that had the power to supersede feelings of isolation and exclusion. Hilda Payne wrote, "I have lost a few of my friends, of course, since I became a Latter-Day Saint, but I have found the greatest of all

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[171] Peter Morley, "The Church in England," *Mormonism: A Faith for All Cultures,"* p59
[172] Transcript, Stratford, 29 December 1914

friends."[173] These groups created a culture that was British in character, easing the transition to a foreign religion, but also making it easier for members to invite non-Mormon family and friends to participate. Mormon communities significantly reveal how British Mormon identity was based on the communal local experience far more than a global network of Mormons. British Mormonism not only survived the first half of the twentieth century, but later thrived because of the unique social culture it created as part of wider British society.

Encouraged by the communities they created, British members observed the Word of Wisdom as a means to define their identity within a society they were charged to lead and elevate. British Mormonism was also shaped by an increase of member autonomy, participation, leadership, and proselyting. However, the void created by the depletion of American missionaries did not only affect the men that took over the presidencies of congregations, but women congregants too. British Mormonism was influenced by vast changes in the female experience, one that was not paralleled by women in America. With men absent, over 400 "lady missionaries" were officially assigned for proselyting and teaching duties. Women set a trend to continue the educational, social, and charitable functions of the branch when the men left for war, often keeping the congregation together. Women presided over meetings, taking on religious responsibilities usually reserved for the priesthood such as leading the Sunday School. Although priesthood hierarchal lines of authority remained, power was unprecedently conceded to the predominantly female membership.

Yet Mormon women saw themselves as different from American male missionaries. By nature of their citizenship and sex, they believed they could more successfully fulfill the mandate to proselyte and imbue society with their religion. They felt able to present Mormon theology in

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[173] Hilda Payne, "Every Little Helps," *Millennial Star,* 22 Oct 1914, p685

a more palatable way to other Britons, observing that their message "seems to carry more conviction when it comes from a countrywoman."[174] British women did not just emulate the traditional methods of street meetings, delivering tracts and door knocking, but attached themselves to other churches, hospitals, Red Cross groups, the Salvation Army, and other local schools and charities. Fundamentally, British Mormons did not see female leadership as a desperate measure. Members believed this level of female participation in the Church was legitimate, a divinely ordained "holy calling."[175] The move was not just a passing phase but was promoted by the American mission president as a "new [movement] of women's work in the church," one inspired by God.[176] Florence Allsop reflected the perspectives of British women when she said, "I am glad that the brethren think I am worthy of such a holy calling… I try to mix with other societies as much as possible, to let them know the gospel."[177] Endorsed and qualified, British Mormon women accepted the responsibility to carry on the Church during the war. In doing so, they profoundly shaped the identity of their religion, from one that had for decades been exclusively led by male foreigners.

Another significant factor in the development of British Mormonism during the First World War was the establishment of the Relief Society. Instituted in Nauvoo, Illinois on 22 March 1842, the female component of Mormonism is still an integral part of Church function and structure. However, before the First World War it had barely existed within the British Church. Initially inspired by the British war effort, Ida B. Smith, wife of mission president Hyrum Mack Smith, worked relentlessly to establish 48 branches of the society in Britain by

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[174] Blake, "Interesting Items," p727
[175] "Latter-Day Saint Primary Association," *Millennial Star,* 26 October 1916, p685
[176] Manuscript of George F. Richards Journal Excerpts 1883-1950, Richards, George Franklin 1861- 1950, MS 20486, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, 29 November 1916
[177] "Latter-Day Saint Primary Association," *Millennial Star,* p685-686

December 1916.[178] Smith encouraged British Mormon women to unite as "sisters and friends…

for the purpose of knitting mufflers and the making of shirts… as may be needed by the soldiers

and sailors."[179] By June 1915, 2,427 pieces of clothing for soldiers had been made by European

Mormon women.[180] Throughout the war, Relief Societies connected to numerous British

organizations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Queen Mary's Needlework Guild.

Female Mormons sewed, raised money, visited hospitals, prepared bodies for burial, entertained

soldiers, collected food and sourced material. Through their extensive work, British Mormon

women were presented with an opportunity for their patriotic and religious identities to intersect

and harmonize.

Smith also saw the work of the Relief Society as an opportunity to change the Mormon

image within British society. The unifying zeitgeist of the British home-front aided this effort.

By utilizing official channels of war relief work, Smith realized she could create diplomatic

connections that had been previously unavailable. Smith explained to the Lady Mayoress of

Liverpool, "The intention of the members of the Relief Society in the Church in England [is] to

join in the patriotic work of the British women."[181] Smith believed that by emphasizing the

nationalism of the British Relief societies, relationships could be built with other British

organizations. She stated, "The work being done by the British Relief Societies has made it

possible for some people of high standing to understand better the Latter-Day Saints and the

doctrines being taught by them."[182] Preaching relentlessly to those "before much prejudiced and

opposed to Mormonism," she actively worked to dissolve barriers in Britain concerning the

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[178] "Statistical Report of the Relief Societies of the British Mission," *Millennial Star,* 1 March 1917, p141
[179] Hyrum M. Smith, "Relief Society Notice," *Millennial Star* 1 oct 1914, p637
[180] J. M. S. "Relief Society Work," *Millennial Star,* 10 June 1915, p360
[181] Smith, "Relief Society Notice," p638
[182] A. B. White, "Relief Society Conferences," *Millennial Star,* 4 November 1915, p702

status of Mormon women. [183] Smith relished receiving many letters from organizations, whose directors had previously harbored animosity towards the Church. On 10 June 1915, the *Millennial Star* published a letter from non-Mormon Mrs. S. Tattersall to Ida Smith stating, "I would like to know you better… Our aims are all on the same lines and we are sisters whether we own it or not… no matter what name we bear, that is nothing, all are in the same plight."[184]

The work of the British Relief Societies should be seen as unique within the broader Church, even distinct from the American Relief Societies. Although a Utahn woman was the instigator of the movement, the methods and goals were disconnected from the main Church that was keen to be seen as neutral. A letter between Ida B. Smith and the Susa Young Gates, of the General Relief Society Presidency reveals how self-contained British Mormon Relief Societies were. Having been refused direct help from their American counter-parts, Smith wrote, "I was very disappointed, as I expected a reply in some measure favorable to so worthy a cause, nether-the-less we were not discouraged. We went to work with even greater diligence to devise some other means… of accomplishing something that would be worthy of the great Relief Society organization of the Church… You will be surprised… what our small, scattered Societies have done"[185] Although the disconnect between the Utah and British Relief Societies was discouraging to Smith, it allowed British members more autonomy in selecting projects and groups the Church could affiliate with.

The prominence of Relief Society work in the British Church was due to the disproportionate number of women to men in Mormon congregations before and especially during the war. The heavily female demographic of the British Church sometimes perplexed the

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[183] Manuscript, Smith, 30 September 1915
[184] J. M. S., "Relief Society Work," *Millennial Star*, 10 June 1915, p360
[185] Ida B. Smith letter to Susa Young Gates, 21 May 1914, Susa Young Gates Papers, Circa 1870-1933, MS 7692, Church History Library, Salt Lake City

few American missionaries left. The lack of men and male leadership was atypical to their expectations and experiences at home. One lamented in his journal, "A person is reminded that he is a Mormon when he and companion attend meetings with 15 to 20 ladies."[186] They sometimes saw themselves as appointed to "keep peace in a branch" between bickering women.[187] Louis Merrill recorded in his journal, "Sister Abery tells me about Mrs. Watson spitting in the soup and then getting sore because Sister Abery objected. Mrs. Watson said it was only a little dropped out of my mouth."[188] Despite any misgivings of the missionaries, British Mormon women recalled decades later with pride the role they took in contributing to Church function. Historians have similarly acknowledged that "much of the unity and strength of the saints [was] due to the activities of the Relief Society which were never better organized, or more energetic and efficient," than during the war.[189] Furthermore, these veteran members explained how they felt the work done in this era was foundational in the creation of British Mormonism. Grace Lilian Parker recalled how she was required as an organist at the young age of 11 and had since watched the Church grow in Britain.[190] The members that remained viewed the war years as difficult, but exciting and pivotal to British Mormonism.

Through war relief and missionary work British Mormon women felt they had literally been given the responsibility to further the work of Mormonism. The Relief Society was the vehicle in "advancing the cause of justice and righteousness and mercy in the earth, and in ameliorating the distress and suffering among the children of men."[191] Dora B. Wintle recalled

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[186] Manuscript of Benjamin F. Hulme journal, Hulme, Benjamin Franklin 1890-1970, MS 21364, FOLDER 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, 7 October 1914
[187] Ibid., 23 October 1914
[188] Manuscript, Merrill, 7 February 1915
[189] Cardon, Louis B, 'The First World War and the Great Depression 1914-1939', *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the British Isles 1937-1987,'* (Germany, 1987), p338
[190] Typescript, Grace Lilian Parker
[191] Ida B. Smith, "A Word of Farewell to the Sisters," *Millennial Star,* 24 August 1916, p541

how the death of her sister at age 19 was an additional loss "because she was a great help in the church really."[192] Wintle reflects an attitude that at the center of British Mormon church function were its members, in particular, women. The work of females through the establishment of the Relief Society was an intrinsic component of the British church, one that successfully combined Mormonism and national identity.

In many instances the war inhibited church attendance, sufficient to close some branches. Without priests to perform essential duties, many individuals were left isolated or had to travel considerable distance to attend alternative congregations. This narrative, although true, does not show the extensive picture of British Mormonism in the early twentieth century. British saints were invested in making sense of what their religion would look like if it were to be a permanent fixture in British society. The First World War was a catalyst in the development of British Mormonism as a unique, but authentic subdivision of the Church. Fundamental changes in self-perception as a legitimate division of Zion, and unprecedented opportunities to lead infused the members with a new understanding of what it meant to be Mormon outside the United States. British members demonstrated these evolving perspectives through their actions and behaviors. Being a Mormon in Britain meant standing as an ambassador for morality, participating in Mormon community and contributing to church growth. Yet it also meant harmonizing these attitudes with the broader milieu of British society. While mirroring sentiments and conduct of the American church, British Mormon identity developed distinctly as a product of the experiences, perspectives, and nationality of its members, those intensified by the circumstances of the First World War.

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[192] Typescript, Dora Wintle

Conclusion

In 1978, a symposium of Latter-day Saint Scholars discussed the challenge then facing the 500,000 non-American Mormons seeking to observe their religion in their host cultures. They discussed the "relation of the gospel to worldly cultures," implying that problems arise when Mormonism is exported to foreign societies.[193] The contributors discussed whether there will always be a tension between Mormonism and the society it inhabits. One commented, "the extent that cultural values blind members of a society so that they cannot appreciate the truths of the gospel, these values function as the chains of hell, fastening people to ways of living below the celestial order."[194] Douglas F. Tobler related the assumptions of Mormonism's difficulty to assimilate into other cultures to the situation of the Church in Europe in the early twentieth century. Tobler claimed that "members were often dependent on [Americans] for their own understanding of gospel principles and practices and didn't always develop the sense of full responsibility for progress and well-being."[195]

The symposium discussion is analogous of the attitude that underpinned American Mormons over half a century earlier as they travelled to Britain to preach Mormonism. Considering their assignment, one wrote, "Upon the shoulders of the 'Mormon' elders, with the help of the Lord, rest this tremendous task… Opposed to this handful of young men is a host of sectarian ministers… patronized by the great, and sustained by the laws."[196] Such narratives have been used to mold a history of Mormonism in Britain, one written to support the viewpoint of its American protagonists. Consequently, the history of British Mormonism in the early twentieth

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[193] Arthur Henry King, "Introduction," *Mormonism: A Faith for All Cultures,* p 1
[194] Reynolds, Noel B., 'Cultural Diversity in the Universal Church,' *Mormonism: A Faith for All Cultures,* p9
[195] Tobler, Douglas F. "The Church in Europe: Challenges of the second century," *Mormonism: A Faith for All Cultures,* P39
[196] Ernest E. Greenwood, "Why the Gospel Will Triumph," *Millennial Star,* 15 October 1914, p669

century, as demonstrated in the symposium, evolved through the lens of American Mormon exceptionalism, one that viewed the British Church as lacking direction, identity, and substance.

This belief that British Mormonism thrived only with American guidance and support was reflected in the remarks made by President Joseph F. Smith at the October 1914 semi-annual General Conference of the Church in Salt Lake City. Smith sympathized with the members in Britain, now bereft of American leadership, and described how they would need to settle for the next best option of home-based leadership. He said, "The poor [British] saints who are practically left without guidance of the elders are feeling sadly the want of their presence… The best experienced [British] men that could be obtained have been advised to take charge."[197] American Mormon leadership expected that without the usual army of American missionaries, the British members would struggle to keep the small church units active. Even when Britons successfully increased baptism and tithing rates, mission president George F. Richard's praise extended to, "I think them fully equal to the **average** missionary from home."[198] (emphasis added)

Yet there is validity in the American-centric interpretation of British Mormonism. Many British members in the early twentieth century struggled to merge their religious and national identities, especially when Mormon behavior became more prescribed, such as observing the Word of Wisdom, prohibiting tea and alcohol in a nation of tea drinkers and pub going social drinkers. Others continued to emigrate to escape hostility and join family in America, or because they longed to live in a Mormon community with a temple. In September 1915, two sisters embarked for Zion only to be torpedoed by German U-boats. After being rescued, they spent five days recuperating and sourcing replacement clothing before once again stepping on a ship,

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[197] "The Eight-fifth Semi-Annual Conference," *Millennial Star*, 3 December 1914, p770
[198] Manuscript, Richards, 17 April 1919

determined to brave a warzone to reach their promised land.[199] Their example is illustrative of how many felt that the fullest expression of their faith was impossible if they remained within British shores.

However, alongside traditional Mormon historical perspective is one that views the early twentieth century as an era in which British Mormons were actively redefining their religious identities to harmonize with their society and culture. Britons drew from their own form of Mormon exceptionalism, one that was infused with their own trailblazing brand of pioneer sacrifice and tried in their own experiential fires of homegrown persecution. Although it looked slightly unorthodox to Americans, Britons were able to create a religious identity more applicable to their existent British Christian culture, a type of Mormonism adapted but not changed, to synthesize more readily with British sensibilities. They contextualized their religious experience in ways that only natives can. Long before ground was broken for the London Temple, British Mormons were reconfiguring the concept of Zion, one whose boundaries were not confined to the limits of the United States but could exist and flourish on British soil.

Traditional British Mormon historiography has also claimed that the saints of the early twentieth century were simply "waiting for the breeze of the 1960s."[200] Such retrospective revisionist statements erroneously suggest that British members were not proactive, and somehow prognosticated that British Mormonism would flourish in the future. Yet evidence shows that members were not passive bystanders. A *Star* article printed in 1967 gave an example of how British members of the early twentieth century viewed their identity as British Mormons. The subject, Evelyn Short, joined the Church in 1912, amidst the height of the Anti-Mormon Crusade era. During the war she was assigned as a "lady missionary" and worked as secretary to

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[199] Manuscript, Smith, 9 September 1915
[200] Christianson, *Regional Studies,* p130

mission President Hyrum M. Smith. During her tenure, Short's assignment in Liverpool meant she avoided the bombing of her home in West Hartlepool. Despite not marrying a church member, Short served as branch Relief Society President six times, welfare chairman, genealogy chairman, Work Leader and on the District Relief Society Board. The author remarked that Short "could [have written] a book about her fifty-five years as a Latter-Day Saint."[201] This article shows how Short believed her membership was full of providence, purpose, and responsibility, despite not marrying within her faith and being over 5,000 miles away from the Utahn Church. Short's service typifies the devotion and faith of many British members of the time.

During the First World War British Mormons accelerated the formation of a distinct identity. The study of this development expands the utility of British Mormon history from its traditionally ancillary role in an American-centric narrative to a study of how individuals harmonize numerous prominent, but contradictory, cultures in their lives. However, this is not to suggest this identity was wholly definitive and exhaustive, by way of a standardized British persona. The image generated here is still generic, formed as a comparison to the traditional hegemonic American Mormon perception. Further studies into the development of British Mormon identity could consider more granular variables, such as regional or generational distinctions. Similarly, British Mormonism was not isolated from, or static in relation to its resident culture, but has responded to emergent changes of the time within and without the Church. For example, continued investigations may focus on British Mormon identity during WWII, economic depressions, women's movements, Church racial issues etc. Furthermore, identity and faith are ultimately an individual's realization and awareness, formed by numerous

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[201] Ann Ingram, "The Old and the New in Billingham Ward Relief Society," *Millennial Star,* October 1967, p48

cultural and non-cultural influences, realities that can often disrupt the assertions of historical interpretation.

Still, major shifts in Mormon theology and praxis in the early twentieth century unavoidably impacted the lives of its members, even those living thousands of miles away. Members no longer had to be concerned with polygamy, they did not have to follow the prophet politically, they did not have to move to the American Zion. Without these tenets potentially dividing loyalties, members could more easily incorporate Mormon principles into their own cultures. British Mormonism thrived by assimilating into society while retaining exceptionalism at its core, meaning identity was necessarily but also ironically strengthened by the determination of its members to appear as different from other Christian churches and society. While nineteenth century emigrants experienced Mormonism in Britain, the remaining members of the early twentieth century saw the creation of British Mormonism. The difference was a reconciliation of religion and nationality, two components that had seemed impossible to scores of American millenarian Mormon missionaries seeking converts to send to Zion. Britons worked to create their own Mormon culture and society, figuratively smashing their teapots to assert their fidelity to faith, while knitting mufflers to bind them to their nation's cause.

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