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Charles W. Penrose: The English Mission Years

Kenneth W. Godfrey

“In those days there were giants on earth,” wrote the editor of the Improvement Era as he paid tribute to Charles William Penrose on his ninetieth birthday.1 Upon President Penrose’s death, half a decade later, George H. Brimhall published a poem in the same magazine, one stanza of which reads:

The songs that owe him their birth,
We sing as if our own.
In fields of thought that gird the earth,
We reap where he has sown.2

Charles W. Penrose was indeed a giant among men, and thousands of descendants of his British converts do, in fact, reap the harvest from the gospel seeds he planted. His last name symbolizes, in a rather dramatic way, the life he seemed destined to live. Pen, in the Cornish language, means head, while Ros means valley, and Charles became one of the heads, or chiefs, in the “valleys of the mountains.” A well known Cornish couplet reads, “By Tre, Ros, Pol, Lan and Pen, you may know most of the Cornish men.”3 It is the purpose of this essay to reintroduce Latter-day Saints to one of the Church’s finest leaders, greatest thinkers, most gifted writers, and first-rate proselyters.

Elder Penrose’s full-time service in Britain exceeded that of every other Latter-day Saint missionary. His first mission alone lasted a full decade, and later calls brought the total to more than seventeen years. In addition, he was a prolific writer for newspapers, a politician of enormous influence, and a gifted poet. During his last two decades, long after most men have retired, he was called to be an Apostle and later a counselor in the First Presidency. Yet he was first and foremost a missionary from the moment he experienced the new birth of baptism until he drew his last breath seventy-seven years later. This study will focus on Charles W. Penrose’s four missions in Great Britain, which together spanned almost sixty years of that mission’s history. He began his first mission in 1851 and ended his last in 1910.

Kenneth W. Godfrey is Utah North Area Director for the LDS Church Educational System.
Charles W. Penrose, the son of tin mine owner Richard Penrose, was born in the London suburb of Camberwell on 4 February 1832. His mother, Matilda Sims, a highly-educated woman of culture, took great pride in teaching her only son. She was also a devout Baptist who freely imparted to him her religious views, and took him with her to Sunday School and other meetings. A precocious boy, Charles learned to read before reaching the age of four and also committed many scriptural passages to memory. When he was four, his mother enrolled him in Sunday School, and the superintendent assigned him to the beginner’s class. But when it became known that he could already read, he was promoted two classes, where he studied the Old and New Testaments with young people much older than himself. His learning was so unusual that his father frequently took the young boy to London’s pubs where he would place him on a table and have him read aloud the daily newspapers, to the delight of the patrons. His mother had taught him to read in a very dramatic way that only increased the impact of this unusual ability. He also entertained at Baptist socials by reciting from memory long and difficult passages of scripture using this same style. He began writing essays and poetry at an early age and lived to see this talent flourish until he became one of the Church’s most powerful writers and gifted poets.4

While still in his teens, Charles began a systematic study of the various Christian religions, comparing their beliefs with those found in the New Testament. He reached the conclusion that God would not “invent so many different and conflicting denominations.” At this time he began his search for the one true church. As he was nearing his seventeenth birthday, he began reading a book about American Indians. In one section of the volume, the writer described Joseph Smith’s telling Indians the history of the Book of Mormon. His curiosity aroused, Charles began to investigate both the Church and the Book of Mormon. After study, pondering, and prayer, he received a manifestation from the Holy Ghost that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was “a perfect reproduction of the church established by Jesus Christ . . . [with] the same Divine authority . . . the same promises and the same powers.” Though his family tried to dissuade him, his faith was sure, and on 14 May 1850 he was baptized by Joseph Timmons. Alone that night, after having received the gift of the Holy Ghost, he prayed that for the remainder of his life the Lord would make the “truth plain to me as it was before Him.”

The Book of Mormon, stimulating his interest in the American Indians, led him to write his famous poem, “Great Spirit, Listen to the Red Man’s Wail,” which is said to have been his first published verse.8 He would later write at least two other poems about native Americans.9

Only six weeks following his baptism, Charles was ordained a deacon and six months later, 6 January 1851, was called on a mission and
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ordained an elder. His family objected to his mission call, and he was also offered a good position in the British government if he would forsake his proselyting labors. Undeterred, Charles responded to the summons from the Lord and was told by the man who had ordained him an elder, George B. Wallace, that “It is expected of the elders of Israel in these last days, that they will wear themselves out in the service of God, and it is better to wear out than to rust out.”

Taking not a penny with them and only the clothes they wore, Charles Penrose and his companion, Elder Pursie, set out on foot for their field of labor, Maldon, in Essex. They were charged to break new ground and build up branches of the Church where there had been none before. After walking all day, with feet bleeding, they could find no lodging, and for the first time in his life Charles slept outdoors. Finally arriving in Maldon, they spent the night, hungry and tired, sleeping on a straw stack. The next morning Elder Pursie was so discouraged that he went home, leaving Charles alone. Still not having had anything to eat and very distraught himself, Charles approached a wealthy man and said, “I am a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, sent out into the world to preach the Gospel.” The man replied, “Give Him my compliments,” and walked away. The young missionary, humiliated at having to beg, finally found a lady who gave him a drink of water and allowed him to sit down in her living room. As he lifted the liquid to his lips, Charles could control his emotions no longer and began to weep.

On 12 March 1854, he remembered those first days in Maldon and wrote in his diary:

In the morning before I arose, I layed and reflected upon the passed three years, from the time I entered Maldon ... without a farthing or a friend but the Lord. I then came into the very house where I was laying. Then there was not a saint in the town and in that same house ... I was [now] as it were, surrounded by friends.

Charles began to keep a diary on 1 January 1854, while laboring in Boxford, Suffolk. He had already served three years of what was destined to be a continuous ten-year mission. In his first entry he records that he had preached three sermons that day and found the Saints “dull of Spirit” and extremely poor, longing to be gathered to Zion. However, his own zeal was undaunted, and at times he even wrote his testimony in the snow with the tip of his umbrella (5 January 1854). Each morning he would wash himself from “head to feet,” regardless of where he spent the night (5 January 1854). His days were taken up in caring for branch and conference business, preaching to Saints and investigators, writing articles for the Millennial Star, studying Latin, French, and algebra, and playing the flute. He attended the theater at every opportunity and not only enjoyed the plays but was also preoccupied with scenery and stage production. Fond of art, he also frequented England’s finest galleries.
Although he was a small man weighing only 147 pounds, he walked so much that he had to cut away part of the inside of his boot because his bones had grown out (12 March 1854). His work and dedication were so noticeable that a Brother Squires prophesied in a January 1854 meeting that Charles would never want for bread nor lack for friends because of what he had done for the work of God (19 January 1854).

Charles frequently attended meetings held by other churches after which he would hand out Mormon tracts and invite the people to his own meetings (21 February 1854). He also called on those ministers who wrote newspaper articles and pamphlets against the Church, causing at least one to acknowledge that he [the minister] was a “weak creature very liable to err” (13 April 1854). Charles also found time to heal the sick and cast out evil spirits, and he won the honor of being the “highest baptizing Elder” in the conference (27 September 1854). In 1854 he met, converted, and fell in love with Lucetta Stratford. His diary frequently notes visits to her home, and on 21 January 1855 they were at the registrar’s office, “united in the holy bonds of matrimony.” Charles thought Lucetta looked beautiful, but he felt “shabby.” After Charles had preached a number of sermons that same day, the newlyweds went to her father’s house where Charles wrote in his diary, “I was united to one whom I loved sincerely, and she returned the feeling with fervor.” Two days later they traveled by train to Brentwood where they were met by a boy with a donkey cart who took them and their boxes to Dorsette and their “humble” dwelling (23 January 1855). In August 1855 Charles and Lucetta were married again, “according to the order of the Church,” by Elder Kimball (15 August 1855).

Charles continued to write poems and songs throughout this period. As early as the middle 1850s, he had sung his own composition, “I’d Be a Mormon,” in many Latter-day Saint meetings. Late in 1855, he was asked by Elder Kimball to write a song that would promote the new plan of crossing the plains by handcart. The very next morning after having received the request, he sang to a large assembly of Saints his newly composed hymn, “The Handcart,” to the tune, “Be in Time” (29 December 1855). He describes it as being very well received. Only a few days later he wrote another song called “Jolly Wagoneer,” that was also widely used to encourage the Saints to cross the plains by means of handcarts.

On 2 May 1856, while Charles was making “himself ready to preach at Ferling,” Lucetta “was taken in labor.” Though she begged him to stay with her, he “steeled” his heart and left her in the care of her mother. After teaching a discussion, delivering a speech before a large audience, and getting lost on the way home, Charles finally arrived at 12:30 A.M. to find that his wife had delivered a baby boy an hour after his departure. The baby was small, having arrived a month too soon. Only
two months later he again left his wife to attend to his missionary duties, in spite of the fact that his infant son was very ill. After preaching to and then baptizing and confirming several people, he walked home and on the way was informed of the death of his child (21 July 1856). The news was a terrible shock to Charles because he had had "full faith that the boy would live." Entering his home, he found his wife "overcome with sorrow" and his son "beautiful in his sleep with death." Their mourning was muted with the knowledge they possessed that, if faithful, they would after the resurrection "educate him in the principles of salvation."

Having been a full-time missionary for more than half a decade, Elder Penrose began to have frequent dreams of emigrating to the Great Basin. He longed to live with the Saints and was completely converted to the doctrine of gathering. While walking along a dusty Essex road one day, he began to contemplate the Zion he had only read and heard about, a Zion with wide streets and clear streams of water on each side, shadowed by rows of shade trees, and banked by majestic mountains. "I could," he wrote, "see it in my mind's eye, and so I composed a song as I walked along the road." When he arrived in Mundon, he held a cottage meeting and sang his newly written song to the tune of "Oh, Minnie, Dear Minnie, Come over the Lea." This was the first rendition of his famous hymn, "O Ye Mountains High."

Many years afterwards he reported with satisfaction that the song seemed to impress and please Brigham Young. He also sang the song at a meeting in August of 1856, where he first met Elder Ezra T. Benson. This began an association with Apostle Benson that would change the course of Charles W. Penrose's life.

Early fall of 1856 found the British missionaries often in grave danger. On one occasion, while delivering a sermon, Elder Penrose "was pulled off the heap" and mobbed. After being roughly handled and set free, he, together with other elders, was pelted with stones, most of which struck the ground making sparks fly around their feet. The mob, he says, continued to yell like devils. On another occasion, when he had been threatened by a group numbering more than a thousand, Charles wrote in his diary that he knew no fear because he was engaged in the cause of the Lord (10 September 1856).

By the time his ten-year mission drew to a close, Elder Penrose had established a reputation as a gifted, powerful speaker who could discourse for an hour and a half without using any notes. He had memorized the scriptures and knew how to use them to support his doctrine. He also had a wonderful sense of humor and could keep audiences laughing for as long as he wished. For example, he once described a plum pudding as "rather a cobbler paste with a raisin here, there and away over yonder" (30 August 1863). On another occasion, after having heard the humorist Artemus Ward speak about his visit to
Salt Lake City, Charles wrote, “Some of his jokes were stale and some fresh, so fresh there was no flavor to them” (19 November 1866). His excellent essays were constantly in demand by Orson Pratt for publication in the Millennial Star. Furthermore, he had consistently baptized more people and had served longer than any other elder in the mission. He had also presided with distinction over the London, Cheltenham, Herefordshire, and Birmingham conferences.

Just before his 1861 missionary release, a situation arose that greatly troubled Elder Penrose. A missionary, unnamed, began to circulate “a sort of quiet slander” against him. There was not a word of truth to the story, and it greatly angered him. He said he had grown used to the enemies of the Church accusing him of all sorts of mischief, but it cut him “to the heart” to have a Church member slander him. Instead of retaliating, he sat down and wrote the poem “School Thy Feelings, O My Brother.” The writing of the poem, which was later put to music, seemed to calm Elder Penrose, and he was able to forgive the offending missionary while continuing to love and serve God.  

Leaving Great Britain and all his family behind, save his wife, Charles Penrose, in charge of 620 passengers, came to the mountains high, first settling in Farmington, Davis County, and then moving to Cache Valley at the request of Ezra T. Benson, where he married a second wife, Louisa Lusty. He also founded a business and was called as a home missionary, frequently traveling with Apostle Benson himself. He had been in Utah for only three years when he was called at the April 1865 general conference to serve another British mission. Before departing he was asked to preach in the tabernacle, and as he finished his discourse and sat down, President Brigham Young said loud enough for the whole congregation to hear, “Amen, that’s a good sermon” (20 May 1865).

After crossing the plains, being beset by both Indians and mosquitoes, Elder Penrose traveled by boat under rather primitive conditions, because there were many more passengers than berths, and arrived in England on 11 September 1865. After a warm bath and a change of linen, he was assigned by President Daniel H. Wells to labor in Manchester. However, he was given permission to visit his mother and sisters before beginning his assignment. Elder Orson Pratt also gave him a book containing the Pratt genealogy, much of which Elder Penrose had collected for the Apostle from British museums many years before. When he came to the house where he and Lucetta had lived when they were first married, his homesickness overcame him, and he wrote that night, “My heart seemed to swell, a great pain was at my heart and with difficulty I kept back the tears which came welling to my eyes” (15 September 1865).

During this period he wrote several articles for the Millennial Star. In “The Everlasting ‘Now,’ ” he points out the problems of those people...
who live only in the memory of the past, as well as those who live only in anticipation of the future, and argues that "it would be much better for both these classes of individuals to bring their minds to bear upon things of the present." In "Particular Providence," he argues that God does intervene in the affairs of men and that the Latter-day Saints, especially, have had unmistakable evidence of this "special providence" on their behalf. He cites the miracle of the seagulls and the crickets as exhibit A. In "The Righteousness of Christ," he contends that while we are redeemed by the "righteousness of Christ," we must accept the saving ordinances and follow the commandments the Lord has revealed through prophets to obtain eternal life. In yet another essay he advocates the idea that Church doctrine should be judged by its effects. He states that Mormonism assures its believers of having a knowledge of the truth; it abolishes the fear of death and produces peace of mind. The restored gospel, he says, makes men free, gives them hope, and demonstrates that communities can exist and thrive in areas of the world thought to be barren and worthless. He declares, "Mormonism is a stem planted by the hand of the Lord, watered by the 'blood of the Saints and Prophets.' . . . Its roots are striking deeper every day." Elder Penrose's writing in these essays is clear, his prose correct and concise, and his positions sound. He had the rare ability to "dash off an article while others were thinking about it." Furthermore, he always seemed to quote scripture correctly. Reporters who checked his quotes found "every word as it should be."

Before going to Manchester Elder Penrose "gave away" his sister Celia at the altar of St. Mary's Church as she married Charles Parker (27 August 1865). In October he composed a song entitled "My Loved Ones at Home" and saw it published in the Star. It was while on this mission that he wrote what he considered to be his finest poem, "The Latter-day Kingdom." This poem, containing thirty-three stanzas, contrasts the restored gospel with the kingdoms of past ages and proclaims the grandeur that yet awaits the "little stone cut out of the mountain without hands." The last eight lines read:

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Such is the kingdom now on earth begun!  
A branch of the great governmental tree  
Whose roots are grounded in the Central Sun,  
Whose boughs bear fruit through all eternity.  
Happy are they who labor in its cause,  
Happy are they who suffer for its cause;  
For all who are obedient to its laws,  
Of all its joys and honors will partake.  
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Like the poetry of the Women's Exponent, Charles Penrose's works are sometimes "superficial, bland, unimaginative, derived from known forms and themes, spelling out its message in language more akin to
prose than to poetry except for a self-conscious adherence to rhyme and rhythm.” However, in spite of their literary shortcomings, his poems do reflect his deep commitment to the gospel and the future glory he foresaw if one were diligent in proclaiming its message. His hymns were better than his poems; in 1865 he composed still another, sung to the tune of “Annie Laurie,” called “Song of the British Saint” (28 December 1865).

After serving for only two months, Elder Penrose was called to be the president of the Essex conference. When he arrived to conduct his first meeting, the Saints greeted him “with long continued applause” (28 December 1865). He not only spoke and sang in conferences but he also visited people he had baptized on his first mission who were “neglecting their meetings” (8 January 1866), often receiving their promise that they would do better. After one meeting he reported that he felt dull and empty but asked the Lord “for his spirit as another witness for the truth and it rested upon me powerfully so that I spoke to my own edification and the comfort of the Saints” (25 May 1866). One Sunday, 4 November 1886, he delivered a sermon regarding the practical duties of the Saints and then visited with a Brother Benee, who had brought a young man to the meeting who proved to be David Gibson, who had been missing for more than three years. Gibson reported that on his way to conference he had been “knocked on the head” and robbed of conference money. This, together with the news he had just received of his wife’s infidelity, preyed upon his mind and caused him to enlist in the army. After rising to the rank of corporal, he contracted brain fever which left him totally deaf, and he was discharged. President Penrose conversed with him by writing in the deaf and dumb alphabet (4 November 1866).

In the spring of 1867 Charles Penrose became the assistant editor of the Millennial Star and began full-time work in the mission office. It was his duty not only to write articles but to get the Star ready for printing as well (29 June 1866). He also renewed his friendship with Apostle Franklin D. Richards, who had succeeded Daniel H. Wells as European Mission president. The fall of 1867 found Charles taking an extended tour of the Church’s missions on the European continent. He was shocked at what he found among non-Church members in France but enjoyed the rest of his tour.

By the spring of 1869 Charles Penrose had been away from his two wives and numerous children for three years. He had learned of both the poverty of his companions and the death of one of his children. In May, after he had written an article for the Star entitled “Zion, Past, Present and Future,” he was invited to Franklin D. Richards’s lodgings for tea. “After beating around the bush for awhile,” Elder Richards said “he thought we would not be called home this year.” He told Charles that he could not get along without him and was convinced that he could do more good there than at home. Charles replied that he thought “three years was enough for
any man to be away from home... that my family was in a condition that my presence was needed.” Elder Richards “looked vexed but said no more” (25 May 1868). By June, Elder Richards told Charles that he could go home, and he began making preparations to do so. But before departing he was assigned to go on a speaking tour of Ireland where, in a street meeting attended by three thousand people, he declared, “There is one Lord and one Faith and one Baptism.” Whereupon he heard a heckler call out, “Yes, and one wife,” raising a general laugh in which Charles joined (19 July 1868). He answered questions about the Church in response to articles that had appeared in the Belfast Telegraph, as well as speaking on one occasion over the sound of the Salvation Army band which was playing nearby.

After his return home, Charles Penrose became a newspaper editor, politician, and one of the most influential men in the territory. In 1885 he was sent to Washington, D.C., with Apostle Brigham Young, Jr., to try to persuade the new President-elect Grover Cleveland to support statehood for Utah. While in the East, to avoid arrest for practicing plural marriage, Charles was called on still another mission to England. On 24 February 1886, just a step ahead of federal officers, he boarded the Wyoming, went into his “cramped little stateroom and kept quiet.” By March he had arrived in England and was set apart to preside, once again, over the London conference, assist the president of the mission, and write for the Millennial Star. Within a few months he wrote a pamphlet entitled “The Only True God;” was involved in a great uproar in Ireland; accompanied President Wells on a tour of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, and Switzerland; and heard his song “The Loved Ones at Home” sung by Angel Croft at a spring concert. This mission lasted for only a year before he was summoned home to assume his duties as managing editor of the Deseret News.

Home again, he wrote his “Rays of Living Light” series, was set apart as assistant Church historian, and in July of 1904 was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In 1906 he was appointed to succeed Heber J. Grant as president of the European Mission. He left for England on 20 October, taking his third wife, Dr. Romania B. Pratt, with him. In his diaries of this mission he always refers to her as the doctor. During the journey he was suffering from injuries to his left hand and knee, the result of a fall in Salt Lake City. By using alcohol he was able to reduce the swelling and the pain as he traveled east. Upon his arrival in England he spent the first days purchasing furniture for the new mission home and visiting with his sisters and aged mother. In response to articles in the Improvement Era by B. H. Roberts and Nels L. Nelson’s book Scientific Aspects of Mormonism, he answered the missionaries’ questions regarding the “Eternity of Ego” (2 May 1907). Thus he began to develop an opinion regarding this topic that would change the course of the
argument for years to come. He regarded the Roberts–Nelson position that intelligence was individual as speculation unfounded in scripture. He did not mind such ideas being taught as long as they were properly labeled. As for himself, he preferred to teach only that which could be clearly justified from the scriptures, and his position would later be adopted by the First Presidency.

President Penrose’s first presidential editorials in the *Millennial Star* were devoted to commenting on a number of articles that had appeared in the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* concerning the Latter-day Saints. It seems that the Reverend Hugh Murphy had delivered a series of sermons on “The State of the Soul after Death” that were remarkably similar in their content to Latter-day Saint doctrine. President Penrose noted the similarities and declared that the Church had been teaching such concepts for more than seventy years.24 In a follow-up editorial entitled “The Duality and Unity of Man,” he wrote that “man’s real identity is that which is spirit, for which on earth this body is prepared.” He declared that

man is composed of a rational, permanent, spiritual personality, incorporated in a body framed out of earthly elements in which he gains experience and an understanding of the grosser things in the cosmos that he could not otherwise obtain, that these elements can and will be quickened and made immortal like the “glorious body of the Son of God,” and that the intelligent, responsible, spiritual entity will have to account for “the deeds done in the body.”25

During his presidency he considered publishing the Book of Mormon with the characters from the Anthon transcript on the flyleaf. He also found time to answer questions relating to Nephi’s killing Laban and God’s seemingly harsh dealings with ancient peoples (7 March 1907). In April he wrote to Professor Nelson and stated his objections to some things found in *Scientific Aspects of Mormonism* (18 April 1907). When a Church member was to be ordained a deacon but was, instead, ordained a priest by mistake, President Penrose said that the intent of the elder acting as mouth was what was important, not the actual words. The man was a deacon. The branch supported the President’s view, but the deacon–priest left the Church over the matter (14 February 1909).

Other *Millennial Star* editorials were devoted to encouraging the missionaries to develop better habits in their proselyting efforts. President Penrose told them that they should not waste time and that pleasure and recreation must be set aside, so as to accomplish the important work of proclaiming the gospel. Personal comfort and convenience were not to stand in the way of duties to be performed. Not one hour should be wasted, and idleness, lassitude, and inactivity avoided. He urged missionaries, further, to be willing to labor where assigned and to be clean in their person as well as in their quarters. At a district
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conference attended by large numbers of Saints and nonmembers alike, President Penrose declared and supported from the Bible the view that while no man had the right to add to that which God revealed, God had the right to add whatever he desired to communicate. It was reported that "intense interest was taken in the discourse."26

In a fine editorial printed in the 10 February 1910 issue of the Star, President Penrose responded to numerous questions he had received about "seeming contradictions" found in the scriptures. He argued that the scriptural passages must be taken in context and that the purpose of the writer should also be taken into consideration. Some scriptural language, he said, was meant to be taken figuratively, and it was folly to interpret such passages in a literal sense. He urged the Saints to refrain from dwelling upon isolated expressions or taking the precise language of the author literally. When a reader understood the writer’s intent, the context in which a passage was written, and the circumstance that caused the writing, President Penrose believed contradictions would, for the most part, vanish.27 The next issue of the Star contained an editorial entitled "Give Credit to Whom Credit Is Due," a strong statement for honesty in citing one’s sources.28 His St. Patrick’s Day editorial was titled "Mormonism and Scientific Thought." In it he defended the position that the beginning spoken of in Genesis, chapter one, might have been thousands or even millions of years before the earth was organized. He said there is nothing in the text that states how long a period intervened between when God said “Let there be light” and when the light appeared. “It may,” he wrote, “have been ages upon ages of our time.” He believed it was possible that this earth had been constructed from fragments of other worlds or bodies that had revolved in space for eons and by attraction became involved in a greater mass. Referring to the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, President Penrose stated that “create” merely meant to organize and that the world was not made from nothing. He was convinced that the elements were eternal, and that the earth was organized from elements just as a statue is created from preexisting marble.29 This is a remarkable, farsighted piece of writing that allows much space for all men to ponder, speculate, and think about the earth’s creation without feeling restricted or restrained, so long as what they teach is not directly contradicted in the scriptures.

Elder Penrose concluded an April editorial on the translation of the Bible by stating that although the Bible, in the main, is a correct reproduction of the sayings of the ancient prophets and Apostles, yet the translation is, in some respects, imperfect. Therefore, he argued, the Book of Mormon is to be preferred because it was translated by the gift and power of God.30 While he cited a number of examples which he believed demonstrated some incorrect Bible translation, the editorial was, in the main, a plea for trust in all the scriptures, in spite of the fact
that the Old and New Testaments, in their present form, at least, do not contain the "direct word of God to Man." Writing in June he commented on an article that had appeared in the London Magazine on things Egyptian found among the Mayan civilization in Central America. The author had come to the conclusion that somehow the Mayans had influenced the Egyptians. President Penrose argued that the reverse was true and saw the article as yet another evidence for the divinity of the Book of Mormon.

His valedictory editorial published in June contained a summary of his four-year term as European Mission president. He had written many articles for the Star as well as tracts and books. At least twice a year he had visited the conferences in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. He had also visited Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, and Norway. He had enjoyed good health, and 3,646 people had come into the Church in Britain alone during his presidency. An additional 8,500 had been baptized in Europe.

Thus he ended more than seventeen years of full-time missionary service in Great Britain. It is doubtful that any other Latter-day Saint had spent, or would later spend, more years in building up the Church in that land than did Charles W. Penrose. The Church in England would not have been what it was, or is, without his wonderful missionary labors. It is somewhat ironic that he was able to convert thousands, yet his own family remained outside the fold. They loved and respected him and were even in awe of his speaking and writing abilities, but they could not believe in his message. He alone had responded to the Shepherd’s voice.

Charles Penrose’s later elevation to the Church’s First Presidency only increased the influence he had among British Saints. He was, perhaps, one of the three or four most influential English converts, and if longevity is a criterion he was without a doubt the greatest missionary ever to serve in that land. The testimony he bore late in his life gives a true insight into the spirit of this remarkable man:

God has blessed me with His spirit throughout my ministry. When He called I bowed in obedience to His will, and am thankful for every opportunity for service in His Church. The best thing I can say to you is to put your trust in the Lord and be willing to keep His commandments and God will be with you whether in joy or in pain, on the land or on the sea, on hill-top or where ever you may be. The great time to learn things of worth and truth is now at hand. Learn that which will make you useful, happy, kind, patient and charitable. All these things are from God. “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness,” so Jesus Christ taught, “and all other things will be added unto you.”

May peace abide with you and the Spirit of God be always in your hearts. 31
NOTES

2 George H. Brimhall, "In Memory of President Charles W. Penrose," Improvement Era 28 (July 1925): 811.
4 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Charles W. Penrose, in Conference Report, April 1922, 32.
8 Lynch, 35–36.
11 Charles W. Penrose, in Conference Report, October 1922, 28.
12 Charles W. Penrose, Diary, 12 March 1854, Utah Historical Society Library, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited parenthetically).
20 Sherry Anderson Lindsay, interview with Joseph Anderson, Library–Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
A map of Sheffield, 9 May 1840
(from Ordnance Survey 1, Sheet 82, Chesterfield)