



10-1-1990

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Malcolm R. Thorp, eds.

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Recommended Citation

Watt, Ronald G. (1990) "*Mormons in Early Victorian Britain* Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm R. Thorp, eds.," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 30 : Iss. 4 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol30/iss4/18>

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RICHARD L. JENSEN and MALCOLM R. THORP, eds. *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989. xiv; 282pp. Illustrations, photographs, maps, index. \$20.00.

Reviewed by Ronald G. Watt, an archivist working in Salt Lake City.

In early nineteenth century Britain, forces of change seemed to be everywhere. Parliament passed the Reform Bill; at the same time, the lower classes, seeking beneficial changes in Parliament, became involved in Chartism. Meanwhile, the middle classes wanted to be rid of the Corn Law Tariff, which benefitted the landholding upper classes. Religion was not without its conflicting forces, either: the Oxford Movement, the Catholics, the Dissenters, and even the Methodists were all influential to some extent.

Into this melee, the late 1830s saw a new religion appear in Great Britain: Mormonism. The Mormon elders preached millennialism, baptism, emigration to the United States, and many other tenets. The story of Mormonism in early Victorian Britain previously found scattered in many publications is now available in one volume: *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, edited by Richard Jensen and Malcolm Thorp. This book emphasizes the period of 1840 to the late 1850s and thus fills that void.

Almost every article in the book was delivered at the Mormon History Association conference held at Oxford, England, in 1987. The editors have arranged the articles in rough chronological order from Robert Lively's sociological article to Ray Jay Davis's article on emigration laws. Although the resulting book tells the story of Mormonism in Great Britain during those years, it does not relate how the gospel first arrived, the experience of Wilford Woodruff in Herefordshire, or some of the usual stories that one hears. Instead, each article focuses on the story that each historian sees as significant. And each essay is worth reading.

The book has a nice mix of biographical, local, background, and general articles on Mormonism in the British Isles. This volume also balances articles written by historians trained in British history with articles by historians trained in American history. The British historians are lead by J. F. C. Harrison, one of the better Victorian scholars. The British historians are better at putting the Mormons in the framework of the British Isles than are the American historians, who tend to isolate Mormon history from the larger context. On the other hand, the article by British-trained Bernard Aspinwall on Scotland overemphasizes the Scotland part and almost forgets Mormonism. An article like this is needed, though, in order to

understand that Mormonism was not happening in a vacuum. Richard Poll's article tends to do the reverse for the Utah War period. It emphasizes the Utah part; the British story, which is still important, takes second place.

The newly discovered 1851 religious census, used by both Robert Lively and Susan Fales, provides some interesting basic facts. Lively's piece is well written, giving the reader some sociological reflections on Mormonism in Britain. Grant Underwood has an interesting article on the religious background in Britain. Ronald Esplin explains how Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles developed their leadership skills. Malcolm Thorp's and D. L. Davies's articles are biographical. Thorp takes three "black sheep" of Mormonism—James Fielding, Timothy Matthews, and Robert Aitkens—and colors them a refreshing grey. Davies's subject, David Bevan Jones, has been portrayed in Baptist literature as a black sheep. Davies portrays Jones, a Baptist minister converted to Mormonism, as a sincere convert, who tried to follow the tenets of his adopted faith. Thorp draws from the rich Utah archives and Davies from the pamphlet collections in Wales.

Four articles, those by Joe Cotterill, Bernard Aspinwall, Andrew Phillips, and Susan Fales, are local studies. Cotterill's article is a short but well-described and analyzed essay with good sources. Phillips weaves an interesting piece describing the local congregations in Essex, the lack of emigration, and the adverse effect of leadership changes on branches. Fales should be commended for writing a demographic article. Although the article tends to be disjointed, the graphs are well placed and descriptive.

Two articles are more general. For the unenlightened, Paul Peterson's article is a bombshell. Some historians have thought the decline of Mormonism in Britain came from teaching plural marriage. But according to Peterson, the decline came about because of the "Reformation" of the 1850s. Many Mormons were not rebaptized and thus were not put back on the rolls. It was the rebaptism policy, not the excommunication of many Church members, that devastated the British Mission. Richard Poll's article, which discusses the retreat of the Utah Church from the British Isles, complements Peterson's study.

Richard Jensen and William Hartley deal with the development of the Church organization in Britain. Jensen's article on local Church councils raises at least one question. How did the branch presidents fit into the structure? Wouldn't strong branch presidents diminish the power of the branch council? Perhaps Jensen did not deal with this issue because the necessary sources were unavailable. Hartley focuses on one mission office, the pastor. He suggests that

the office of pastor was like the modern regional representative office. However, the apparent overlap between the different offices in the mission left me a little confused about the lines of communication and authority.

The last two articles, those by Ray Jay Davis and David J. Whittaker, are excellent additions. Davis's study of the laws of emigration both in Britain and the United States is well researched and well written. Whittaker's bibliographic article is a nice conclusion. More bibliographies like this one are needed.

The book has one shortcoming. Since it consists of a series of articles focusing on Mormonism, it needs one essay describing the British Mormon story from 1837 to at least 1860. If one knows the overall story, the various articles fit in nicely, but a novice in British Mormon history, would have difficulty getting a sense of context.

The book, nevertheless, fills an important gap in the story of Mormonism. The editors and authors are to be commended for putting together a group of articles that enlighten us on the period of early British Mormonism. Now it would be nice to have similar volumes on later periods of Mormonism in Great Britain.