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## Mormon Passage of George D. Watt

Ronald G. Watt

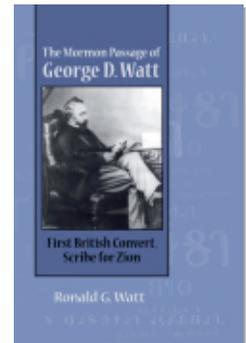
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## MISSION TO BRITAIN

After I left you, and launched forth with my frail bark upon the boisterous sea of varigated sercumstances that surround the servants of God, when apart from the body of the saints, I began to learn and know many things by my own experience, that I had not in the least anticipated in my former life.

George D. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848

**E**arly in May 1846, the Watt family left New York City, returning to Liverpool less than four years after they had left. They stayed in Liverpool for about two months, where Watt learned about the joint stock company that would benefit Mormon emigrants. Then Reuben Hedlock, president of the British Mission, assigned him to go north to Scotland. Great Britain had been racked by the devastating potato blight that had struck Ireland in 1845, reducing the harvest to a fraction of its expected plentitude so that famine and starvation swept across Ireland. The British cabinet under Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel supported a repeal of the tariff on wheat, enabling the British to import inexpensive grain from Europe to feed the Irish, but the repeal came too late. The potato blight, a fungus, appeared in 1845 and continued for three years until 1848, when it disappeared as suddenly as it had come. Somewhere between 500,000 and 1,500,000 Irish lost their lives in the Great Hunger.<sup>1</sup>

1. Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform, 1815–1870*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 352–56; also see “Irish Potato Famine (1845–49)” in Wikipedia, available online at [http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish\\_Potato\\_Famine](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Potato_Famine); and “The History Place, Irish Potato Famine,” available online at <http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/famine>

The other event that affected Europe—although less while Watt was in the British Isles—was the revolutions of 1848. Beginning in France when the people expelled their monarch, the revolutions spread to almost every country in Europe except Russia and Britain. However, within two to four years, the countries affected reverted to conservative and reactionary governments. Most millennialist religions viewed the revolutions as one of the cataclysmic events preceding Christ's second coming.<sup>2</sup>

None of Watt's writings contain comments on these revolutions, for he was giving his attention to his mission experiences. He expressed both exhilaration and disappointment during this period, working diligently to lead efficiently and inspire as he had been inspired but with only inconsistent success. He had a position of prominence but was replaced by younger men. In a poignant letter to Willard Richards at his mission's midpoint, he summarized what he had learned from his experiences. Probably his most significant achievement—which he may have considered a mere sideline—was taking classes in Pitman shorthand and becoming proficient by reporting many meetings. This accomplishment, more than any of his missionary activities, had a lasting impact on the church.

The British Mission had changed very little since Watt had left. Before he had departed in 1842, the apostles had grouped the branches into a hierarchy of conferences. Between the Watt family's departure in September 1842 and June 1846, fifteen ships had left Liverpool for New Orleans. Altogether more than two thousand Mormons had left the British Isles for America.<sup>3</sup>

When George and Molly Watt arrived, Reuben Hedlock, an American, was the mission president. Hedlock was an enthusiastic preacher who eagerly used the printed word to spread the gospel, but he was an unorganized, worrisome spendthrift. He had many pressures as mission president, most of which he could not handle competently. Also he received very little advice from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.<sup>4</sup> Hedlock donated mission funds to poor British converts who wanted to emigrate. Consequently, he diminished funds and created more expenses. He feared that he would have to stop publishing the *Millennial Star*. In February 1844, he wrote to Brigham Young that, if matters did not improve drastically, "I shall not have a sovereign left to live on through the summer." All of the demands had placed him in debt, and he had to borrow from the temple fund to keep the mission running; he felt certain, however, that his financial books were in order. Four conference presidencies remained vacant, and he begged for missionaries,

2. As quoted in Craig Livingston, "Eyes on the Whole European World: Mormon Observers of the 1848 Revolutions," *Journal of Mormon History* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2005), 78–112. These quotes come from pages 86–88.

3. "British Mission Manuscript History," 1842–46, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

4. Reuben Hedlock to Brigham Young, Willard Richards, and Theodore Turley, February 25, 1844, in "British Mission Manuscript History."

but church leadership had its own problems in Nauvoo and no one to send.<sup>5</sup> Finally, in January 1845, Wilford Woodruff arrived in Liverpool to take charge of the mission. He worked hard at reviving this once-strong field of labor and brought the mission back to financial solvency.

Sometime in this period from 1843 to 1846, Thomas Ward, the former mission president, came up with the idea of something called the British and American Commercial Joint Stock Company. Ward proposed establishing a shipping company that would sell stock to individuals throughout Britain, including non-Mormons. As a commercial company, it would ship merchandise from Great Britain to the United States and agricultural products from the United States to Britain. Also it proposed to transport European Mormons to the United States either free or for a nominal fee. The idea was attractive because it promised that the church would not need to draw upon its resources.

The company's success depended on money invested by Britain's Mormons—but most of them came from the poorer classes and had little or nothing to invest. Nevertheless, Ward and Hedlock appointed a committee to write the articles of incorporation for the company, completed in April 1845. Thomas Ward was designated as president, and Thomas Wilson, who had chaired the committee, became the secretary.<sup>6</sup> Because of new laws, the company had to rewrite the incorporation articles, which delayed progress for a year. Wilford Woodruff attended the company meeting in December, but although he had endorsed the concept in April, he refrained from speaking about it at that conference.<sup>7</sup> On January 20, 1846, Woodruff again showed confidence in Hedlock by reappointing him as president of the mission. He advised the Saints to gather, but he made no mention of the joint-stock company.<sup>8</sup> He sailed for the United States on January 22, 1846.

Watt arrived in England on June 6, 1846, just when the mission presidency began preaching about the joint-stock company again. Hedlock enlisted him to urge members to invest in the company. Watt said, "It is the subject of my heart, I have put it on; it is part and parcel of my religion: it is hallowed by the prayers of the first presidency of this church, and all those

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., April 8, 1845. Although the committee members are not identified, they were probably the men listed as the first shareholders: Reuben Hedlock, Thomas Ward, Thomas Dunlop Brown, Peter McCue, Matthew Caruthers, Hiram Clark, James Flint, Dan Jones, Henry McEwan, Henry Cramp, John Druce, Isaac Brockbank, Robert Wilson, and John James.

7. Ibid., minutes of meeting, December 14, 1845.

8. Richard L. Jensen, "The British Gathering to Zion," in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987*, edited by V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter (Solihull, UK: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 165–98; "British Mission Manuscript History," January 20, 22, 1846; Wilford Woodruff, "To the Saints in the British Isles, Greetings, January 20, 1846" *Millennial Star* 7 (February 1, 1846): 42.



England and Southern Scotland

of tried and sterling faith.” He concluded his letter with the following comments: “What, then, can impede the progress of such a system; the foundation of which is laid in wisdom, hallowed by the prayers of apostles and prophets, protected by the British lion, supported and fed by Saints, and regulated by the judicious management of men of profound wisdom, learning, and virtue, clothed with the authority of the great Jehovah?” He felt that the joint-stock company was such a great idea that it would “call forth the confidence, support, and energies of all Saints.”<sup>9</sup>

Watt arrived with a letter appointing him to work in western Scotland. Hedlock must have presumed that meant for him to preside over all of Scotland. So sometime in July, Hedlock appointed Watt to oversee all the conferences in Scotland with headquarters in Glasgow, a seacoast city. Watt’s position was that of a submission president. The Scottish conferences’ (districts’) presidents reported to Watt, who in turn reported to the British Mission president, while in the rest of Great Britain, the conference presidents reported directly to Hedlock. Although Watt had family ties in Scotland, he had not spent a concentrated period of time in this major regional industrial center, which lay about 250 miles north of Liverpool and 40 miles west of Edinburgh. With more than three hundred thousand people, as calculated by the census of 1840, it displayed dramatic differences between rich and poor.

Watt announced his appointment by a letter in the *Millennial Star*. He commented that he felt his own inadequacies for the position, for he had had little experience during his last four years: “I feel to some extent the weight of such a charge, called, and am aware of the diligent perseverance required to do justice to the same, but . . . connected with your prayers and united assistance, we may be able to accomplish a work that will not rank among the least in the pages of history.” Despite this humble plea for assistance, he also asserted quite authoritatively, “Let no man presume to dictate to his leader except in a proper manner.” He then encouraged the members: “Let humility be the leading virtue, from the president down to the least member.” He reminded them that “while I am among you I shall act according to the spirit of this letter, taking a straight forward course in all my proceedings, having no respect for one man more than another in the line of my duty.”<sup>10</sup>

On August 12, Watt attended the Glasgow Conference meetings, where he appointed David Drummond, who had been the Glasgow branch president, to preside over the Glasgow Conference and be his first counselor. He named William C. Dunbar, a Glasgow native, as his second counselor, and Graham Douglas as Drummond’s replacement for Glasgow branch president.

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9. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, June 12, 1846, *Millennial Star* 7 (June 15, 1846): 199–200.

10. George D. Watt, “Address to the Saints in Scotland,” *Millennial Star* 8 (August 1, 1846):19–21.

Remembering the poverty he and his family had suffered during his earlier Scottish mission from 1840 to 1842, Watt made what some may have considered a radical proposal. He gave a talk on charity and proposed a scheme to support himself and Dunbar, his second counselor. His plan was for each Mormon family in the Glasgow Conference to subsidize him and his counselor by sending a penny a week to the conference office. Up to this point, the missionaries had been supported by the largess of the members, not by a paid subscription that smacked to some of the tithes collected by the state church. The Glasgow Conference, however, voted unanimously to accept this plan, but William Gibson, who was the conference president in Edinburgh, objected to it.<sup>11</sup>

Hedlock must have considered Watt an effective speaker and a good convincer because he sent him on August 30 to the Clitheroe Conference, which was situated about forty miles northeast of Preston. Here Watt preached on the “duties of the priesthood, and advising in all things, to act in charity and love” in the morning services. In the afternoon, at the conclusion of the meeting, he urged the members to remain faithful in discharging their duties. “He considered the Joint Stock Company as a germ from which glorious things would spring in these last days.”<sup>12</sup> Despite Watt’s enthusiastic sermons on the joint-stock company, its records do not show that he invested any money in it, probably because he did not have any.

After Wilford Woodruff reported to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on the state of affairs in the British Mission, Brigham Young and others became concerned over the joint-stock company’s expenses.<sup>13</sup> Many British Saints invested their pennies, essentially the widow’s mite, but it was not enough. Hedlock continued enthusiastically to support the joint-stock company, but he admitted “labouring under embarrassments” (meaning he did not have enough money). In August 1846, he left Liverpool for London, never to return to his duties as president of the British Mission. Simeon Carter, who had arrived as a missionary on June 22, 1846, complained in his diary before Hedlock left that “I now found Hedlock was much confused in the ship emigration and soon found he was much in difficulty and debt.” When Carter attended the conference in Manchester, he discovered that Hedlock had fled: “Here I found the Church in much confusion on Hedlock’s account, for he had gone and left all his affairs and had borrowed much money with a promise to pay and did not.”<sup>14</sup>

11. “Conference Minutes, Glasgow,” *Millennial Star* 8 (October 1, 1846): 73–74; “Glasgow Conference,” minutes, September 12, 1846, LDS Church Archives; see also William Gibson, Diary, August 22, 1846, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

12. “Clitheroe Conference, August 30, 1846,” *Millennial Star* 8 (September 1, 1846): 52–54.

13. Jensen, “The British Gathering to Zion,” 170–73.

14. Simeon Carter, “Simeon Carter’s Mission to England,” May 7, 1846–August 1848, quoted in “British Mission Manuscript History.”

Thomas Ward, who was the president of the joint-stock company, said on August 30 in the Clitheroe conference “that it was generally known that elder Hedlock was no longer with us, and that he had got into embarrassed circumstances principally by being too good natured.” He also indicated that Hedlock did not have “sufficient cunning to meet the villany of the parties with whom he had to deal in Liverpool.”<sup>15</sup>

In October Apostles John Taylor and Orson Hyde, followed by Parley P. Pratt, arrived in Liverpool to supervise the missionary activity, regulate the joint-stock company, and examine the books. They arrived about a week before the British Mission’s two-day conference in Manchester, where all the missionaries gathered, including Watt. Even with all the serious business ahead of them, they could also have entertainment and enjoy each other’s company. On October 16, the night before the conference, they gathered together. As Franklin D. Richards, who became an apostle in 1849, recorded, “In the evening brs Watt, Dunbar & Gibson gave us some scotch melody.”<sup>16</sup> The evening after the first day’s meeting, several of the elders gathered at a local member’s home for “tea.” After their meal, William Dunbar, Watt’s second counselor, sang some songs and then brought out his bagpipes and, as recorded by Oliver Huntington, “gave us a couple of first rate tunes and brother George Watt danced to one of them.”<sup>17</sup>

The deputation from America found that the president of the joint-stock company and a few others had been drawing a salary and the board had also loaned Hedlock an exorbitant £400 for unspecified purposes. On October 3, Orson Hyde and John Taylor asked the members “to patronize the joint stock company no more for the present.” In an editorial, Hyde told the British Mormons that “the spirit of God never sent forth men to preach ‘Joint Stockism;’ neither did it ever inspire the hearts of our elders to proclaim it.”<sup>18</sup>

The failure of the joint-stock company devastated many of the British Mormons. Those who had invested lost most of their savings. Those who hoped to travel to America for almost nothing lost a hope for a better future. Hyde informed the members that even though those associated with the joint-stock company had good intentions, “their wisdom had been turned into folly.” Hyde made it clear that the church could not “be held responsible for any of its liabilities or its losses,” but the British Mission leaders paid every penny that came into their hands to the shareholders.<sup>19</sup>

15. “Clitheroe Conference,” 53–54.

16. Franklin D. Richards, Diary, October 16, 1846, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

17. Oliver Boardman Huntington, Journal, October 17, 1846, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

18. “Dear Brethren,” *Millennial Star* 8 (October 15, 1846): 90; also see “Circular” in the same issue, 92.

19. See the following articles in the *Millennial Star* 8: “Balance Sheet of the British and American Joint Stock Company,” December 6, 1846), 160; “The Joint Stock Company,” December 6, 1846, 102; and “Notices,” December 19, 1846, 180.

At Manchester on October 17, the British Saints excommunicated Reuben Hedlock and disfellowshipped Thomas Ward for their mismanagement of the joint-stock company. Ward made a full disclosure, taking responsibility for his faults, and was restored to full fellowship sometime in November.<sup>20</sup> Hedlock stayed in London and remained estranged from the church.<sup>21</sup>

After the conference in Manchester, Watt detoured through Preston to visit his mother, staying with the two Preston missionaries: Henry Jacobs and Oliver Huntington. Huntington was only twenty-three at the time, and Jacobs was his brother-in-law.<sup>22</sup> On the following day, Watt took the two to meet his mother, Mary Ann Brown, whom Huntington described as “a very good, smart, old sister and full of life.” For the visit, she also invited Margaret Anderton, who called herself a seer, “a curious looking and acting woman she was. Coarse in word and deed. Not so coarse neither but plain and easy. . . . Brother Jacobs and I thought to try her, and watch her words and the run of her conversation, to see if we could not find a contradiction, but none could we find.” Huntington said that she would look at a person, just like Joseph Smith did, from head to toe: “Her eye commencing at the face, go down and then up. This she called ‘taking stock.’”

When Anderton looked at Henry Jacobs, she became very excited and “said he was born under the planet Jupiter . . . and that he would prosper let him go where he would.”<sup>23</sup> Anderton told Huntington that he had been “born under the planet Venus” and would have continual trouble “until I was 36 years old.” At that time, he, even if he had married a half dozen times already, “should be married to a black eyed woman, who would bring me great riches, and then would my fortune change for the better.” (Huntington did not marry anyone when he was thirty-six.)<sup>24</sup>

According to Huntington, Watt’s mother said that Anderton had prophesied several things about her son that had already come to pass, although Huntington did not record any details. She looked into “a glass, like an egg, in which she saw, and told him [Watt] many things concerning his wife, and my wife. His was to die within 3 years; and my wife she said was not my own, and was not the right one for me to have.” Huntington had married Mary Melissa Neal in Nauvoo on August 17, 1845. Molly Watt may well have been sickly as a result of working for years in a factory during her youth, but she died ten years later.<sup>25</sup>

20. *Millennial Star* 8 (November 1, 1846): 111. The note at the end of the article does not say that he was restored to fellowship, but it implies it.

21. Details about Hedlock’s life during this period appear throughout vol. 8 of *Millennial Star*. For Ward’s death, see “Died,” *Millennial Star* 9 (March 14, 1847): 96.

22. Huntington, Journal, October 20, 1846, p. 75. Huntington misdates his journal by a day. The day they went to Mary Ann Brown’s and saw Anderton was October 21.

23. *Ibid.*, 76–77.

24. Huntington, Journal, 77.

25. *Ibid.*

They returned to their room, and since they had no pressure to rise early, “we lay until our breakfast was ready, having our own times and taking our comfort, telling our own stories.” Later the next day they “commenced talking about old times and scenes of home. Then upon our present situation in all relations.”<sup>26</sup> The events Anderton described were probably interesting curiosities for the missionaries, despite Huntington’s careful summary, but it is doubtful that they took them seriously. Such folk beliefs and individuals who claimed supernatural gifts were common in both the United States and England and merely offered intriguing possibilities.

Watt, with freshly updated shorthand skills, looked for chances to exercise them. Reverend Joseph Baylee, a “Christian” minister (probably from the Church of England) in Liverpool, issued Hyde a challenge to debate the issues of Mormonism versus other Christian faiths on November 21. Hyde replied he had to obtain the services of a phonographic writer from Scotland, but Baylee failed to reply to the counterchallenge, thus robbing Watt of an opportunity to try his shorthand skills.<sup>27</sup> Hyde thereafter discouraged Watt from even using his skill, thinking he needed first to be a missionary. In a letter to Willard Richards, Watt wrote, “I have not practised much of late in the art of reporting. Bro O. Hyde considered that it was not good for me to meddle with it while I am in this country.”<sup>28</sup>

At the end of October, Franklin D. Richards arrived to replace Watt as president over Scotland.<sup>29</sup> Although no confirming documentary evidence has survived, Hyde probably wanted to give Richards an important position while he waited to be named as British Mission president; his replacement may have come as a shock to Watt because he thought he was doing some good work. Richards arrived in Glasgow, accompanied by his brother, Samuel, whom Hyde had appointed president of the Glasgow Conference. Within a few days, they had moved into the Watt home with the Watts still living there. Franklin spent most of his time in the office. Watt began regular missionary duties, often assisting Samuel. According to Samuel’s diary, in late October, he and Watt administered to one ill man and the next day visited an older lady who was lame, prayed for her, and gave her a small bottle of oil to anoint her limbs.<sup>30</sup>

The missionaries found some time for pleasure. Twice in November, Watt, Molly, and the Richards brothers went to plays (sixpence each). In

26. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1846, 78.

27. “Correspondence,” *Millennial Star* 8: (December 19, 1846): 158–59.

28. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848, holograph, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives.

29. Franklin D. Richards, Journal, October 16, 1846, in *Selected Collections of the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2003), DVD 34.

30. Samuel W. Richards, Diary, October 28, 31, 1846, LDS Church Archives.

mid-December, the four dined at a member's home with Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor, followed by poetry readings and "good conversation." In December they took tea at another member's house and then saw a play at the Theatre Royal (for one shilling, sixpence, apiece).<sup>31</sup>

Even though the Richards brothers had displaced Watt from his position of authority, he harbored no ill feelings toward them. They were cousins of his adopted father, Willard Richards, had much experience in the church, and were friends from Nauvoo. In mid-November, a couple of weeks after their arrival, Samuel Richards discussed possible future assignments with George and Molly. Watt was not free to move until Christmas, when the twice-weekly phonography class he was taking at Sir Isaac Pitman's school ended. The Richards brothers decided that Watt would remain in Glasgow until Christmas, then probably go to his old field of labor, Edinburgh, while Molly kept house for the two brothers. Both George and Molly Watt accepted this decision, and the evening ended, as Samuel wrote, with "all in good humour."<sup>32</sup>

Just after Christmas, Watt went to Edinburgh under the direction of William Gibson, the conference president and Glasgow branch president. A few days later, Watt joined in planning the Saints' New Year's Day celebration and was part of the decision to have whiskey punch instead of tea. Even though the Word of Wisdom was advocated throughout the church, many members thought it was merely advisory, calling for moderation, rather than abstinence. When Gibson discovered that celebration organizers had planned whiskey instead of tea, he objected: "I told them I protested against such a thing & would not sanction it by my presence. Upon that Br Watt said it was a hard thing if men were not to be allowed a little whiskey on New Years day. For his part he could take it or he could let it alone." Watt took the position, however, that it would be wrong to deprive the Scots of their national drink on this occasion. Gibson told Watt that the Scots could do anything within reason in their homes but not at the meetinghouse. "I wanted Br Watt to understand that it was I not he that was responsible for their acts in a meeting like that. George then got in a rage & said he wished me to understand that he was a High Priest while I was only an Elder & therefore he was above me in authority." Gibson quickly told Watt that he was under the presiding authority in the branch and area. In the wake of the ensuing argument, Gibson set off to Glasgow to report matters to Samuel Richards, who sided with Gibson. Franklin D. Richards and Gibson then traveled to Liverpool to discuss the matter with Orson Hyde. To settle the issue, Hyde ordained Gibson a high priest: "I was ordained a High Priest by Elder Orson Hyde President of the Twelve Apostles so that the means that G. D. Watt tried to bring me down the Lord made the means to lift me

31. *Ibid.*, November 6, December 17, 1846.

32. *Ibid.*, November 12, 1846.

up.” In Gibson’s absence, the Glasgow Saints celebrated New Year’s Day, apparently with the whiskey punch.<sup>33</sup>

On January 9, 1847, after arriving in Edinburgh, Samuel Richards went with Watt to a planning meeting with leaders from the branches. “While on the way bro. Watt, told me his feelings toward Bro. Gibson, that he considered him his enemy &c &c and I knew that bro. Gibson felt hard towards him as he had operated against his influence there.” Still, Watt knew it would be better to reconcile this quarrel. “While standing before the Council bro Watt handed me a line [a note] to know if he should have an understanding with Gibson before the Con[ference].” Richards objected, but Watt, remembering his difficult time with John Greenhow on the ship *Sidney* many years before, met with Gibson anyway. Richards wrote, “I objected but heard them both after the Council dispersed and saw all settled with them which took near 1 ½ hours.”<sup>34</sup>

Richards still thought it wise to remove Watt from Edinburgh. In mid-January, Orson Hyde, the mission president, approved his move to Staffordshire with headquarters in Burslem, about fifty miles southeast of Liverpool. At the end of January, Hyde came up from London and met with George and Molly Watt. The next day, January 28, 1847, Richards bade the two good-bye, receiving “a kiss from each.”<sup>35</sup> Hyde, John Taylor, and Parley P. Pratt sailed for the United States on February 23. Franklin D. Richards replaced Orson Hyde as president of the British Mission, and Orson Spencer became the mission copresident with responsibilities primarily as *Millennial Star* editor.<sup>36</sup>

The county of Staffordshire was the center of the pottery industry, and its workmen made fine china for the world. Hundreds and hundreds of kilns shaped like bottles poured smoke into the atmosphere. In 1840 Apostles Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith had converted many Staffordshire people, but by the time Watt arrived, the conference was struggling. The Staffordshire members felt that their conference and mission leaders had neglected them. The conference consisted of 321 members in eleven branches; the largest, Burslem, had 101 members. In several branches, missionary work was languishing. Watt immediately visited the branches and analyzed their needs.

In his first conference meeting, which was held in the Temperance Hall in Burslem on May 16, Watt said that he found good Saints, “but who were in a languid and drooping condition.” Then he declared, “When I came

33. Gibson, Diary, January 1–28, 1847.

34. Samuel Richards, Diary, January 9, 1847.

35. *Ibid.*, January 2, 9, 13, 27, 28, 1847.

36. Orson Hyde, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* 9 (March 1, 1847): 76. This notice of Watt becoming the president of the Staffordshire Conference was signed by Orson Hyde; see also “Editorial,” *Millennial Star* 9 (April 1, 1847): 105.

here I found it something like the gathering of grapes after the vintage is over." Even though the devil was at work with all his might, "I am happy to say that the officers are learning their duty and that the spirit of God is burning within them and prompting them to do the same." He also advanced six men in the priesthood and ordained three elders, one priest, and two teachers at the Staffordshire conference on May 16, 1847.<sup>37</sup> Watt only stayed six months in Staffordshire; then Franklin D. Richards appointed him to preside over the Preston Conference.<sup>38</sup> For a while, Watt was the president of both the Staffordshire and Preston Conferences, which he administered from Preston. Franklin D. Richards wrote him at least one letter "about difficulties in Staffordshire &c."<sup>39</sup> In September of 1848, Richards appointed Joseph Clements, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy who had arrived in October from Council Bluffs, as president of the Staffordshire Conference.<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile, in early 1846, the main body of the Saints in the United States had struggled across Iowa, bade farewell to five hundred of their hardest men, who enlisted in the Mormon Battalion, and established a temporary home in Winter Quarters and Council Bluffs, where they suffered through the winter of 1846–47 and many died.

Caught up in the pressures of the exodus to Winter Quarters, Willard Richards, Watt's surrogate father, found little time to write to him. (Watt was just as delinquent in writing to Richards.) On March 1, 1847, after having been awake all night writing on official church business, Richards penned a three-page letter to Watt at 5:00 a.m., communicating the exciting news that "President Young, Kimball with most or all of the twelve at this place including myself expect to leave for some place at the foot of the mountains . . . with 2 or 300 pioneers in about two weeks." Their families would follow them as soon as the grass was well enough established to provide the oxen with feed. He concluded by admonishing Watt to "thrust in your sickle like a man of God . . . and bear your testimony of the first principles of the gospel." He closed with the comforting promise: "Always watch the whisperings of the still small voice which will ever cry in the bosom of every humble and prayerful soul."<sup>41</sup> If Watt answered this letter, and he surely would have, that letter has not survived.

When Watt returned to Preston in July 1847, it was like a homecoming, for his mother still lived in the town, and this was the community where he

37. "Staffordshire," *Millennial Star* 9 (August 1, 1847): 228–30.

38. Franklin D. Richards, *Journal*, July 19, 1847. According to a notation in his journal, Richards wrote a letter to Watt on that day appointing him president of the Preston Conference. Watt probably received it a few days later.

39. *Ibid.*, August 14, 1847; "Notices," *Millennial Star* 9 (August 15, 1847): 256.

40. "Appointments," *Millennial Star* 10 (October 1, 1848): 299.

41. Willard Richards to George D. Watt, March 1, 1847, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives.

had first heard the gospel. The Preston Conference stretched from Euxton, about 15 miles south of Preston, to Kendal, a little more than 120 miles north. It was almost impossible to administer such a large geographical area with its eight branches and a total of 527 members. Preston, the largest branch, had 371 members. Kendal, the farthest away, was the next largest with 36.

After Watt's arrival, the Preston Conference held its first meeting on September 26, 1847. In his first short sermon in Preston, Watt told the members "that a union of feeling was necessary, in order that the Spirit of the Lord might be with us; . . . and peace and good order would be in our midst." He also ordained fourteen men to new priesthood offices. Amos Fielding, an American elder, admonished the brethren in the audience "to go out and preach the gospel." At the end of the day, John Foley, the clerk wrote, "Peace and order prevailed in our midst, and the countenances of the brethren and sisters showed the joy and gladness of their hearts."<sup>42</sup>

During his second conference in March 1848, Watt exhorted the congregation "to store up the precious word of God upon their memories, that the Holy Ghost may call it forth in the very hour when they need it, and thus throw out the net of truth, and catch men. At the end of the day, Foley wrote, "Thus passed one of the happiest days of our lives, and one that will never be erased from the memory." The Saints had become stronger since Watt had arrived.<sup>43</sup>

Watt must have made a concerted effort to practice his shorthand.<sup>44</sup> He probably took shorthand reports at the Preston conferences and other meetings. In a letter to Willard Richards in February 1848, he reported "I can write at this time 90 words per minute. A month's practice would bring me to a 120 which is the average amount of words that are spoken in a minute, a Phonographer in full practice is able to write 140 per minute."<sup>45</sup>

While Watt was in Preston, Europe erupted in revolution in 1848, prompted by various classes and reasons. In some countries such as France, it was due to liberalism held by the middle classes mixed with socialism in the lower classes. In Italy and Hungary, the motivation was nationalism. In Germany the revolution was primarily a middle-class movement, but in Austria, nationalism and oppression of the lower classes provided the spark. The revolutionary movements that began the process were bloody but short. The old order's reaction was also short but more organized, and more people lost their lives than in the revolutions the previous year. As these revolutions swept across Europe, the *Millennial Star* turned to predictions of "wars and rumors of wars." To Orson Spencer, who was the editor,

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42. "Preston," *Millennial Star* 10 (January 1, 1848):4-6.

43. "Preston," *Millennial Star* 10 (July 1, 1848): 198-99.

44. "Conference Minutes, August 13th, 1848," *Millennial Star* 10 (August 15, 1848): 260-66.

45. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848, holograph, Richards Papers.

“The dethroning of sovereigns and the radical changes of long tried governments have become a matter of everyday talk.” He thought the Christian nations should turn “unto God and the power of primitive christianity be restored, and the world will be regenerated,” an allusion to the Mormons being able to preach in these new areas.<sup>46</sup>

The revolutions of 1848 in Europe revived the Chartist movement in England, which had flourished earlier in the 1840s. Chartist leaders now saw an opportunity to pressure the British government to grant greater participation to those who were shut out of the electoral process. They called a general convention for April 1848 and prepared a petition signed by more than five million people demanding these rights. Fearing revolution, the government quickly acted to prevent the “great procession” from marching, and the movement collapsed. Electoral and economic reform would have to wait until later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>47</sup> It is difficult to tell whether the Chartists affected Watt in his missionary labors. He must have at least read and heard about the petitions and also the revolutions taking place on the continent, but none of his surviving writings or recollections comment on them.

We cannot tell how well Watt was doing in the Preston Conference. In August 1848, there were 529 members. By September 1849, the Preston Conference had baptized 29, eight had emigrated, and there were 525 members. A likely reason for the decline was that the area had been heavily proselytized for a decade with a significant number of members emigrating. In 1849 Wales exploded with more than 1,000 baptisms, and the city of Edinburgh alone had more than 150 baptisms. At the end of 1849 and midyear of 1850, John Foley, the Preston Conference clerk, did not turn in reports, so no evidence exists for that year. By December 1, 1850, the Preston Conference had declined to 450 members with 12 new baptisms and no one emigrating.<sup>48</sup>

As conference president, Watt must have promoted emigration since that was a major theme in the mission. In one case in August 1847, he walked from Preston to Liverpool, a distance of almost thirty miles, with a “Company of Saints who are to go on the ‘Charlotte.’”<sup>49</sup> While Watt was in

46. Editorial: “Latter-day Saints Millennial Star,” *Millennial Star* 10 (July 1, 1848): 201–2; Livingston, “Eyes on the Whole European World 78–112; “General Conference,” *Millennial Star* 10 (August 15, 1848): 252.

47. For a good discussion of the Chartist movement and the workers’ plight, see Woodward, *The Age of Reform*, 133–46.

48. For information on the Preston Conference, see the following articles from *Millennial Star*: “Extract from Conference Minutes,” 11 (September 15, 1849): 287; “Reports of Conferences,” 12 (January 1, 1850): 15; “Half Yearly Report of Conferences,” 12 (July 1, 1850): 207; and “Statistical Report of the Church in the British Islands for the Half-Year Ending December 1st, 1850,” 13 (January 1, 1851): 15.

49. Franklin D. Richards, Diary, September 29, 1847. It is not known how many walked with Watt.

Liverpool, he cut out a profile of Franklin D. Richards using scissors, a pen knife, and black paper, which pleased Richards.<sup>50</sup>

Brigham Young wrote to Watt on April 16, 1847, when the vanguard company was already sixty miles west of Winter Quarters, instructing him to “procure 200 lbs” of printers’ font of phonotype.<sup>51</sup> He wanted to publish a small book, but he did not say on what subject, probably a primer for education. Phonotype was an attempt by Sir Isaac Pitman to change the English longhand alphabet into a phonetic one by using symbols for every sound. It is remarkable that, despite his many pressing responsibilities, Young was considering the possibility of revising the English alphabet. It is not clear what success Watt had in carrying out these instructions—apparently none since Franklin D. Richards visited Sir Isaac Pitman in October, obtained a small font sample from him, and reported his success to Watt. The mission office sent it to Winter Quarters,<sup>52</sup> but for some unknown reason, it was “ruined” upon arrival.

At the end of Young’s letter, Willard Richards had Thomas Bullock, the scribe, pen a postscript. He had apparently forgotten his 5:00 a.m. missive in late March, for he apologized for not writing sooner: “The great cause of Zion, taken en masse swallows up all minor or perrsonal considerations, and wife, and children and relatives appear lost as it were, and we are obliged to forsake them all to build up the Kingdom of God and bring about a reign of peace upon the earth.”<sup>53</sup>

On February 5, 1848, Watt sent a personal letter to Willard Richards, who was back in Winter Quarters. He shared with him conclusions formed on his mission: “I might write upon the work of God in this land, or I might give you the news pertaining to the conditions of this and other nations, but Bro. Spencer so completely skims off the cream from all news, both of a home and foreign nature, that I feel perfectly unable to interest you, should I venture to write upon any matter which his pen has pointed at.” He prefaced his comments with a nautical image: “After I left you and launched forth with my frail bark upon the boisterous sea of varegated sercumstances that surround the servants of God, when apart from the body of saints, I began to learn and know many things by my own experience, that I had not the least anticipated in my former life.” He was probably alluding to Hedlock’s fall, the collapse of the joint-stock company, his own removal as president of the Scottish Mission, and perhaps his quarrel with Gibson.

His first conclusion was “that I am more foolish than wise in general. This conclusion has checked in some degree my headstrong nature, teaching me

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50. *Ibid.*, October 1–2, 1847.

51. Brigham Young to George D. Watt, April 16, 1847, Watt Papers; there is also a copy in Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

52. Franklin D. Richards, Journal, October 29–30, 1847.

53. Willard Richards, postscript to Brigham Young’s letter to George D. Watt, April 16, 1847.

to think twice before I speak once." Reflecting on Hedlock and Ward, he had decided "that those of my Bren. [Brethren] Who are in high standing or vice versa, are men that are subject to like passions as myself, and am therefore not surprised should they step aside, but considering myself will spread a mantle of charity over my brothers defects, expecting the same measure to be meted out in return to me." He found "that true merit without a sword is better than the empty sound of many words destitute of merit." His next conclusion he had to learn many times: "That true merit without a sound, is better than the empty sound of meny words destitute of merit." The requirements for mortal happiness "is filled up in the possession of a healthy body, a healthy and good wife, healthy and good children, a good inheritance in the proper place, among the proper people and a good conscious." This was possible "only when the government of God prevails among men." He added, "As to our temporal condition I will not complain, when I think of the afflictions that my Bre[thre]n and Sister in Zion must have passed through." Times were difficult in England: "We have suffered much, and suffer at this time, in consequence of the hardness of the times in Lancashire."

Then Watt approached the main point of his letter. He longed to return home to Zion: "Sister Watt longs to mingle again with the saints in Zion." He thought the mission had been a good experience for he was "still willing to lay down my life, by the Lords help for this great work, which I know to be of God, and so is my Dear Wife." It had probably not provided him with the satisfaction that he had experienced on his first mission with Orson Pratt, however. "I have a great desire to be with you. I desire it more than Gold or anything this world can produce." He said that he was "willing to labour in Babalon for the good of souls, until my Bre[thre]n in Zion shall say come home, for I know what loss I suffer by being absent from you will be made up to me in some way."<sup>54</sup>

In the middle of May, Richards responded to Watt's letter. He had left with the advance party to the Great Salt Lake Valley and returned. His short description of the valley was "climate very healthy air clear & pure, Water excellent." He said he was not sure when Watt would be able to return. The revolutions of 1848 had shown Richards that people were discontented with the old "precepts & creeds." The elders were sent to show them the truth, so "I would say to thrust in your sickle, preach the Gospel, call men to repentance."<sup>55</sup>

Watt felt that the letter was for all of the missionaries in Great Britain and gave it to Orson Spencer to publish in the May issue of the *Millennial Star*. Richards added a personal addendum that was not printed. He told Watt that they had received the "Phono-type," but it was ruined. He also advised that it was "wisdom for you to write Phonography as you have opportunity,

54. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848.

55. Willard Richards to George D. Watt, May 16, 1848, holograph, Watt Papers.

but not to infringe on your ministerial labors.” In fatherly tones, he told Watt, “I am pleased with your letter and hope you will continue to come to such conclusions as will make you wise with many others.”<sup>56</sup> Through his letters, Richards remained adviser, counselor, friend, and, most important, a surrogate father to Watt.

At the general conference held in Manchester on August 13, 1848, Orson Spencer, the president of the mission, asked Watt to be the clerk, and Watt chose Thomas D. Brown, then the *Millennial Star* editor, as his assistant. Spencer then introduced Orson Pratt, one of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The *Millennial Star* published the minutes, which included six pages of Pratt’s sermon. Even though Watt had told Richards earlier that he was only a junior reporter, he indeed did the job well enough to capture Pratt’s talk as it fell from his lips.<sup>57</sup>

Furthermore, as a backhanded compliment to Watt’s shorthand ability, William M’Ghie, a British member, published a play in the *Millennial Star* in July 1849 entitled “Priestcraft in Danger—A Drama.” Characters known to the Saints made appearances in it. His Heber C. Kimball, referring with praise but some anxiety to Watt’s diligence in taking his stenographic reports, says, “Elder G. D. Watt, in particular, writes in such a strain I hardly know whether he is on the earth, in heaven, or somewhere between the two. I pray God that excellent man may remain humble under the great power with which he is endowed.”<sup>58</sup>

Sometime in early December 1848, Watt left Preston to travel with William Speakman, a native missionary, north to Newcastle on Tyne, Speakman’s new assignment. Watt remained with the newly widowed Speakman for two weeks, visiting “many of the branches of that conference.” He then traveled into Scotland’s southwestern counties, fulfilling his long-cherished desire of visiting his ancestral site. In late September, he arrived at Gatehouse of Fleet, a small town in Kirkcudbrightshire. The town probably had not changed much since Watt’s father, James, had resided there. He found a branch of ten Saints: “I found the Saints in Gatehouse all in good standing except two.” He promptly cut off those two for indulging in “taking intoxicating liquors to excess.” In his report to the *Millennial Star*, he added a little homily about the virtues of cold water. It was to him the item that was in greatest abundance, “both as drink to refresh the stomach, to sweeten the blood, and to invigorate the mind; also as the means of washing away the filth of the flesh, and to give power and strength, health and beauty to the skin.”<sup>59</sup>

56. Ibid.

57. “Conference Minutes,” *Millennial Star*, 10 (August 15, 1848): 260–66.

58. William M’Ghie, “Priestcraft in Danger. A Drama,” *Millennial Star* 11 (July 15, 1849): 191.

59. George D. Watt, “Port William Feb. 24th, 1849, Wigtonshire,” *Millennial Star* 11 (March 15, 1849): 93–94.

Although Watt does not mention personal details in this letter, he probably visited his grandfather, Andrew Watt, in Skyreburn, a short distance from Gatehouse, and his second wife, Hannah. Andrew died a little more than a year later on December 5, 1849, just fourteen months after Watt left Gatehouse. He also probably visited his Aunt Jannet Watt and Uncle Charles Watt, who were living in the old family home in Anworth. His other paternal aunt, Margaret, now sixty-one, lived only a short distance away in Girthon.<sup>60</sup> His family, with whom he had lived as a boy, greeted him warmly and invited him to stay with them, at least for a while. He worked hard but had almost no success: "I have scattered much seed in Gatehouse and its immediate neighbourhood, but owing to the cold nature of the soil, it does not germinate, so soon as it would in a southern latitude." He later admitted he baptized one man and "expect to baptize several more to night."<sup>61</sup> He had no success with his own family. His aunt and uncle had a certain standing in the community, which they were already jeopardizing by housing this heretical relative: "My own people here have turned me out of their house; they told me I might stay as long as I pleased if I would cease my preaching, but I could not stay and preach; so I took my hat and my bag, and left."<sup>62</sup>

Watt's identity as a Mormon was stronger than his heredity as a Watt relative, and he left—although his account placed the blame squarely on his aunt and uncle: "Thus my own blood relations have turned me out without a farthing in my pocket, among strangers, near 200 miles from home and 100 from any of the churches of the Saints."<sup>63</sup> The position of being rejected and cast out for the gospel's sake was an honorable, even romantic, one—although the reality must have had its bitter side. He found shelter, though not of the lavish sort, with an old couple who were on town relief and were probably members. The lady welcomed him: "As lang's I hae a hoose, an adrap parritch tae tak, yees share it wi me, saie dinna ye fash yer lugg, nor be troubled ava about it; lay doon yer bag an a'll mak ye a wee drap tea." He thought "at this unexpected welcome, given in native eloquence, my heart melted within me and a flood of tears rushed from my eyes and spoke my gratitude to the old matron." He immediately pronounced a thankful benediction: "O God, bless thine aged handmaiden, and let thy salvation come

60. Scottish Census, 1851, County: Kirkcudbrightshire, Parish: Anworth, vol. 855, p. 5, microfilm, film no. 1042833, Family History Library. Watt's grandfather and his wife were living at Skyreburn Walkmill, which is a short distance from Gatehouse and Anworth. They were close to the sea. Margaret is recorded in Girthon Parish, Kirkcudbrightshire, parish 866, p. 14, microfilm, film no. 1042833; it is a little farther from Gatehouse but still close. The dates of Andrew and Hannah Watt's deaths come from their headstone in the Anworth parish cemetery; photograph of headstone in author's possession.

61. "Letter to T. D. Brown," *Millennial Star* 10 (December 1, 1848): 367.

62. *Ibid.*, 366.

63. *Ibid.*

to this house.” He remained there a few weeks: “I have remained here ever since, eating such things as they set before me, asking no questions.”<sup>64</sup>

In February 1850, he left for Wigtonshire, the county immediately west of Kirkcudbrightshire. It was something of a psychological turning point. Since his relatives had rejected him, his brothers and sisters in the gospel would thereafter be his family.<sup>65</sup> When he corresponded with the mission president, Orson Pratt, he was in Port William, Wigtonshire, about thirty miles from Gatehouse: “I have been two weeks in this place . . . and have preached five times. He thought Scotland was more difficult than other places: “It requires great endurance, perseverance, patience and determination in a man who labors in Scotland (especially in this part of it) to open places which are entirely new.”<sup>66</sup> He did find one Mormon there, Joseph Maxwell, whom Watt must have baptized in Preston three months earlier and was there for unknown reasons. He ordained him an elder.<sup>67</sup> Watt probably returned to Preston in early March.

After three years in Britain, Watt expected to return to the main body of the church, but financing the trip was an enormous challenge. He had barely been able to get by day to day. The *Millennial Star* of April 1, 1849, petitioned the Saints throughout the mission to help him: “It is his privilege to return to the land of Zion, next fall; but the conference over which he presides is unable to give him the necessary assistance to help him and his family across the great waters. He is however able to obtain the means by the handy work of his own hands, in the business of cutting likenesses with the scissors.” Orson Pratt, the mission president, gave “Brother Watt liberty to travel among the conferences to obtain means in this way, while at the same time he will preach and instruct the Saints, where opportunity permits.”<sup>68</sup>

The Preston members also wanted to help send Watt to the United States, and they organized a council to raise money for him. The council, wanting to encourage others to take advantage of Watt’s artistic ability, wrote to Orson Pratt, “We have much pleasure in recommending to the patronage of the Saints, who may be desirous to obtain correct likenesses, our beloved president G. D. Watt.” They felt it was their “duty to give him this recommendation as an introduction for him to the Saints in other conferences.”<sup>69</sup>

How far he traveled, peddling his skill, is a mystery, but he at least went to London, where he came into contact with a church member by the name of J. H. Hawkins, who suggested that they could raise money another way. Hawkins wrote the *Millennial Star*, “It has been, for some days, my happy

64. Ibid., 366–67.

65. Ibid., 367.

66. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, “Port William, Feb. 24th, 1849, Wigtonshire,” *Millennial Star* 11 (March 15, 1849): 94.

67. Ibid., 93.

68. Editorial, *Millennial Star* 11 (April 1, 1849): 105.

69. Preston Conference Council, letter to the editor,” *Millennial Star* 11 (May 15, 1849): 155.



Engraving of George D. Watt (1849)

privilege to have the society of our excellent brother Elder G. D. Watt, whose blandness of manners, and edifying teachings have contributed greatly to benefit myself and family.” He continued, “I find myself unable to express my gratitude in words, seeing that Brother Watt was endeavouring to obtain the means of gathering with his family to the valleys of the mountains.”<sup>70</sup> Hawkins sat down and drew a picture of Watt. “Feeling desirous to do all in my power to promote that object, I have had his portrait engraved for the purpose of supplying those Saints who feel a similar sentiment with myself,

70. J. H. Hawkins, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* 11 (July 15, 1849): 223.

with a faithful likeness and memento of the amiable original; and at the same time afford them an opportunity of aiding him in his noble efforts.” Hawkins produced the engraving at his own expense and “intend to devote it entirely to his benefit, as a slight expression of esteem.”

The editor of the *Millennial Star* wrote, “It is with pleasure we recommend to the notice of the Saints the engraved portrait of Elder G. D. Watt.” It also hoped that he will “through this medium, obtain ample means to assist himself and family to the Great Salt Lake country.”<sup>71</sup> It is not known how much the sale of this engraving helped Watt in his attempt to raise enough money. The following month the editor again appealed to his readers to sell the Watt engraving: “For his convenience, and to facilitate his departure, we wish the book agents of conferences and branches to supply themselves with the amount of portraits they think they can dispose of.” That provided for posterity the first image of George D. Watt in his lifetime.<sup>72</sup> The journal still had some left a year later, when it advertised “Portraits of G. D. Watt, quarto, 1s. each.”<sup>73</sup>

Watt expected to leave sometime in the fall of 1849, but for unknown reasons, his emigration was delayed, not just for a few months but for a year and a half. During that time, he stayed mostly in Preston, although he made preaching tours within the mission.<sup>74</sup> On August 5, 1849, he spoke at the Manchester quarterly conference on the way Heber C. Kimball had first introduced the gospel into Preston. Joseph Eckersley, a native missionary, found his sermon “very edifying.” Watt followed it up with a sermon on the gathering, as Eckersley wrote, “in a masterly manner proving by scripture what a Zion is and were [where] located, and also the Zion of the last days to the satisfaction of the Honest.”<sup>75</sup>

On September 7, 1850, Brigham Young announced a new program called the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company (PEF), designed to help the poor in particular. It was a revolving account from which British Saints could borrow, finance their emigration, and then repay the loan once they were in Utah. Watt did not use this fund, but probably about twenty-five thousand others did.<sup>76</sup>

71. Ibid.

72. Editorial, *Millennial Star* 11 (August 15, 1849): 249.

73. “Portraits and Plates for Sale,” *Millennial Star* 12 (June 1, 1850): 176.

74. Editorial, *Millennial Star*, 105.

75. Joseph Eckersley, “A Record of the Dealings of God with Me,” *Journal and Reminiscence*, August 5, 1849, LDS Church Archives.

76. The best source about the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company is still Gustive O. Larson, “History of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company (master’s thesis, University of Utah, 1926); see especially chaps. 5, 6, and 10. Also see also Gustive O. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom: Mormon Desert Conquest, a Chapter in American Cooperative Experience* (Francestown, NH: Marshall Jones Company, 1947), chap 11 and 25. See also Philip A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century*, (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), 26–27, 130–35. Larson says that

Near the end of October 1850, William Gibson, now president of the Manchester Conference, asked Watt to take down in shorthand his debate with Reverend Woodville Woodman. Woodman had challenged a proselytizing missionary in Gibson's conference to a debate, and the missionary had asked Gibson to fill the assignment instead. Watt readily assented. Gibson recorded that "the largest Hall in Bolton was taken capable of holding over 3000 person seated for there was a large gallery besides." There must have been posters all over the city and county. "It created quite an excitement all over the County. The Railroad Co[mpany] between Bolton and Manchester ran special Trains every night of the Discussion."<sup>77</sup> Joseph Eckersley wrote that "the large place was crowded with hearers."<sup>78</sup>

The three-evening debate focused on the Godhead and the signs promised to believers. Gibson commented that Woodman "quoted very few [passages] from the Book [Bible] giving Chapter & verse according to the rules." Although they were quotes, "he quoted some & misquoted others from memory & he was not very well pleased at me for quoting so many & giving chapter & verse where to find them."<sup>79</sup> Watt sent his transcript to the *Millennial Star*, which published it as a pamphlet. The *Star* editor, Orson Pratt, enthusiastically urged, "We have been favoured with a phonographic report of this discussion, by G. D. Watt. . . . The Saints will be much pleased and greatly edified by a perusal of the strong and powerful arguments displayed throughout the whole discussion. . . . If the Saints desire a feast they should purchase and read this discussion."<sup>80</sup>

On August 15, 1850, the First Presidency announced in the *Millennial Star* that George D. Watt and Orson Pratt should come to Utah: "We shall expect them early in 1851, as circumstances will permit," the epistle stated.<sup>81</sup> In the next issue of the *Star*, an editorial by Orson Pratt commended Watt for his service: "Brother Watt has laboured in this country for several years, and has been a blessing among the Saints in many conferences."<sup>82</sup> Watt must have rejoiced when this news reached England. He was going "home," even though he had never been there. Being with the people of God was what mattered. He had, in fact, served his last mission. He would never again preach to unbelievers in "Babylon."

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the church helped a hundred thousand people. The PEF financial ledgers have more like seventeen thousand people, but even they are incomplete, so the number is more like twenty to twenty-five thousand. For the list in the ledgers, see Ronald G. Watt, "Perpetual Emigrating Fund Ledger Index," 1992, Historical Department, LDS Church Archives.

77. Gibson, Diary, 1850, p. 99.

78. Eckersley, Journal and Reminiscence, October 31, 1850.

79. Gibson, Diary, 1850, p. 99.

80. "Discussion," *Millennial Star* 12 (December 15, 1850): 376-77. The cost for this pamphlet was sixpence.

81. "Third General Epistle of the Presidency," *Millennial Star* 12 (August 15, 1850): 245; see also *Frontier Guardian* 2 (June 12, 1850): [2].

82. "Appointments," *Millennial Star* 12 (September 1, 1850): 267.

Watt attended the general conference for the European Mission (primarily the British Saints) held at Carpenters Hall in Manchester in October 1850. He was one of the secretaries for this conference, and the detail of the sermons indicates that he took shorthand throughout the sessions.<sup>83</sup> At that conference, he was released along with seven other conference presidents and two traveling elders.

In mid-December, Orson Pratt sent a circular letter to the mission notifying the members that he and Watt would be leaving on January 31, 1851, aboard the *Ellen Maria*.<sup>84</sup> The ship had been commissioned to take 378 Saints to New Orleans, and Pratt appointed Watt as its president. Because of this responsibility, the church probably paid his passage, but no record of that remains.

Watt expressed his idealistic feelings about his new homeland in a poem, published in the *Millennial Star* as “G. D. Watt’s Farewell.” It communicates exuberance at returning to the body of the Saints, a new home in a place of liberty. He describes it as a fruitful land, a safe retreat where Brigham is king, no government can vex the Saints, and Jesus Christ will find his people when he begins his millennial reign:

Farewell, we cross the mighty deep,  
Not in search of earthly treasure;  
We go, a rich reward to reap,  
Of heavenly joys; lasting joys; lasting pleasure.

With songs we leave our father-land,  
The fondly-cherished scenes of youth,  
We go on Zion’s heights to stand,  
With veterans Saints who’ve bled for truth.

We go where Ephraim’s fruitful vales,  
Shall tremble in the mountain breeze;  
And serfs oppressed, from all the world,  
Shall shout, I’m free, O sweet release.

Where milk and honey, oil and wine,  
With corn, and oats, and rye,  
And sheep, and oxen, with their kine  
Are blessings found in full supply.

Where genius in his mighty power,  
Shall with the ore, the rocks and clay,

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83. “General Conference,” *Millennial Star* 12 (December 15, 1850): 368–70.

84. Orson Pratt to the British Mission members, December 13, 1850, Orson Pratt Collection, LDS Church Archives.



From Frank Graham, compiler, *Lancashire One Hundred Years Ago* (1968)

The busy harbor at Liverpool

Build mighty temples, sculptured towers,  
To rival art in grand display.

Where Brigham, "lion of the Lord,"  
Shall roar from Zion's safe retreat,  
And kings shall fear, throw down the sword,  
And bring their honors to his feet.

Where Christ shall come to greet his Saints,  
Bind the devil, wipe their tears,  
Restore their dead, end their complaints,  
And with them reign a thousand years.<sup>85</sup>

85. "G. D. Watt's Farewell," *Millennial Star* 13 (March 15, 1851): 96.