

The World of Joseph Fielding: Chapter 9

James Fielding's Description of the Missionaries' Arrival

James Fielding's own words about that first weekend he was reunited with his brother Joseph exist in a letter preserved in the LDS Church History Library. James wrote a letter to Mary and Mercy in 1840, almost three years after the events of that fourth weekend in July, 1837. Their sister Martha had married Peter Watson by this time, and both are mentioned.¹



James Fielding rejected the doctrines of Mormonism brought by his brother Joseph.

I was sorry to find by the letters you sent some weeks ago that a long letter written by myself not long after we had received the intelligence of your having embraced the Mormon faith never reached you. That letter contained a kind of epitome of what had transpired in our family & in our native land since your removal to America & also expressed a strong fear lest your new revelations should prove nothing but a hoax or imposture. I'm detailing what has taken place since our Br. Joseph came over to England. I might fill a volume. I shall however confine myself to a few of the most prominent incidents. You express a wish to know what were the particular reasons why we rejected the Mormon revelation. I will just answer this inquiry as being not possible. But before I proceed I wish to state that I shall advance nothing but what I know to be truth itself and I do hope that you will give me credit for the accuracy of my statements altho' they may affect the credit of Mormonism. I shall be honest & hope you will be candid.

I should observe that my prejudice (so to speak) was quite in favour of this new revelation etc., notwithstanding my suspicions & fears. I felt a strong desire that it might prove to be true & a kind of exultation at the idea of seeing for myself the marvelous & wonderful works which your letters would reasonably lead us to expect. Such were my feelings when the Elders 6 in number (one was poorly at their lodgings) came to our house late on Saturday night, and now begin my reasons, I may say our reasons for rejecting Mormonism.

No sooner had the Elders come within the door that I was seized with a sudden & strong conviction that they were not men of God. I had generally felt a kind of sacred unction taken in company with holy men. Here it was quite the reverse. I had on my mind an unconquerable impression that the whole system of the 'L. D. Saints' was a base imposition calculated to deceive & delude those who might come in contact with it, at the same time I felt an unaccountable estrangement from even Joseph himself. However I was determined not to be guided in my judgements the feelings I have described.

I thought within myself 'surely these men must be activated by some powerful motive else they would not have left their families etc and taken so long a journey' etc. Hence I thought 'at all events they ought to have a hearing' and proposed that they should speak Sunday afternoon with 'this condition & understanding, that nothing should be advanced' which was at variance with the received doctrines of the church to which Joseph replied,

‘You need entertain no fear on that head. The Elders have too much good sense to do any thing of that kind.’

Accordingly they spoke in the afternoon and too in the evening; & in the evening contrary to promise the doctrine of baptism was urged on peril of damnation. The strongest language was used & the whole drift & force of the preaching seemed to bear down upon one single point, baptism. The people appeared to be all in a ferment & I soon began to see where I was to cut it short. Many of the dear simple souls whom God had made me the means of saving were decoyed away from me & my little church. I could compare the influence the addresses of the Elders had upon the minds of several of the members to nothing but witchcraft. I clearly saw that it was according to St. Paul ‘reducing spirit.’ In vain did I remonstrate & argue. They appeared perfectly deaf to the plainest reasoning, yet did not stop what they were doing.

I went to the six Elders (Joseph being at our house) at their lodgings and reasoned with them & God gave me power to confound them. However they assured me that God had sent them to gather all the righteous out of the various churches. I told them God never sent them [to] state their word & act dishonourably. They quoted St. Paul’s words ‘being crafty I caught them with guile’ as a justification of their conduct, and when I shewed that that passage had no such meaning one of the Elders threw down his book of Mormon on the table with a vengeance.

About this time I met with a book belonging to Mr. Watson on the subject of religious impostors etc., and how was I surprised to find an almost exact resemblance between the sects there mentioned & Mormonites, especially in the account given of the French & English Prophets who sprang up some years ago in London. I now saw as clearly as I saw the noon-day light that Mormonism was a chip off the same block as the revelations of Joanna Southcoate,² the French Prophets & many more of the same charades, only I must say after reading their addresses etc and the book of Mormon, the former very far exceeded the latter in point of common sense and their agreement seemed to breathe the very spirit of piety & which were so very scriptural in their expressions I did not wonder that such multitudes should have united with them.

I have remarked to Martha & Mr. Watson that I thought it quite probable had I been in the spot at the time & without apprized of the nature of a delusion I should have been a convert for the ‘F & E Prophets.’ These followers gave every proof of sincerity & of their eager desire for salvation. Like the Mormonites they gave up their property, submitted to persecutions & to death itself in behalf of their cause.

I may well ‘as face answers to face in a glass’ so they resembled the ‘L. D. Saints’ or vice versa. I indulged a sort of desperate hope that there was something extraordinary to the Elders as to the power of working miracles etc etc. A little after this the infant child of one of our members was taken ill. The Elders went and proposed to the Parents to lay their hands on the child & recover it. They consented to it, but instead of the child getting better it very soon after died, altho they seemed confident of its recovery, several instances of this kind came out & with which I was made acquainted. Sometime after this I was

informed that a curse was denounced upon me & others by the Elders because we had rejected their testimony etc and I have subsequently found that it was quite a common thing for the Elders to deal out curses on those who opposed them.

James concluded the letter with financial reasons for rejecting the LDS Church:

Another circumstance which greatly influenced my mind was that when members left me & joined the Elders they seemed to lose all sense of common honesty. Many of them owed money for sittings [in explanation, money members paid to sit in specific pews] at Vauxhall chapel which we have never been able to get to this day, and what several of them had promised towards the erection of our new chapel they considered themselves quite at liberty to withhold on their joining the Mormons.

Today, in the twenty-first century, it is relatively easy to have the words from James's various letters side by side on computer screens for study. Was James's dismay at the LDS missionaries more than losing financial support from his congregation? Was he prejudiced against Americans? What was he looking for in a man of God?

In a much later letter to his sister Mary, James told of an American minister who had come to England in 1844:

A most exhorting man. . . The power of God seems to rest upon him in an unusual degree. Thousands under his ministry are overwhelmed with the divine influence, much in the same way as they were at the day of Pentecost. While he is preaching there is first a deep sighing or groan, then a burst of feeling cries for mercy succeeded by acclamations of praise. Mr. C. is of the Wesleyan Connection and is instrumental of great good.³

Whatever the reasons were that James did not see the LDS missionaries as men of God, many of his congregation did believe. This was the beginning of a great division in the Fielding family which never healed.

Elder Kimball wrote of James Fielding and his reaction to the missionaries' preaching:

These considerations had their weight upon his mind, and caused him to act as he did; and notwithstanding his former kindness he soon became one of our most violent opposers. An observation which escaped his lips shortly after this circumstance I shall here mention. Speaking one day respecting the three first sermons which were preached in [his chapel]; he said that 'Kimball bored the holes, Goodson drove the nails, and Hyde clinched them.'

However his congregation did not follow his example, they having for some time been praying for our coming, and having been assured by Mr. Fielding that he could not place more confidence in an angel, than he did in the statements of his brother respecting this people; consequently they were in a great measure prepared for the reception of the gospel' probably as much so, as Cornelius was anciently. Having now no public place to preach in, we began to preach in private houses, which were opened in every direction, while numbers believed the gospel.⁴

During the week, Joseph Fielding, John Goodson and another missionary, “called on several Preachers of this Town.” He continued, “We found them living in a very comfortable manner. Their Parlours were very rich. Bro. G. observed not many Mormon Elders can get such Quarters as this. Some treated us with respect. Some entirely disregarded our testimony; against 2 we washed our feet. None gave us any assistance.”⁵

Elder Kimball spoke of a minister who “forbid us baptizing any of his members, but we told him that all who were of age, and requested baptism, we should undoubtedly administer that ordinance to them.” Saturday evening, July 29th, the missionaries met together to plan the next day’s events. Elder Kimball was appointed to baptize several of their investigators in the nearby River Ribble.

The Missionaries Begin Their Second Full Week in England, Sunday, July 30th, 1837

The adversary was not unaware of the importance of the missionaries’ work. Elder Kimball wrote of a dramatic experience which took place the morning after their planning meeting:

About day break, Brother Russel . . . came up to the room where Elder Hyde and myself were sleeping, and called upon us to rise and pray for him, for he was so afflicted with evil spirits that he could not live long unless he should obtain relief. We immediately arose, and laid hands upon him, and prayed that the Lord would have mercy on his servant and rebuke the devil. While thus engaged I was struck with great force by some invisible power and fell senseless on the floor, as if I had been shot; and the first thing that I recollected was, that I was supported by Brothers Hyde and Russel, who were beseeching a throne of grace on my behalf.

They then laid me on the bed, but my agony was so great that I could not endure, and I was obliged to get out, and fell on my knees and began to pray. I then sat on the bed and could distinctly see the evil spirits who foamed and gnashed their teeth upon us. We gazed upon them about an hour and a half, and I shall never forget the horror and malignity depicted on the countenances of these foul spirits, and any attempt to paint this scene which then presented itself, or portray the malice and enmity depicted in their countenances would be vain. I perspired exceedingly, and my clothes were as wet as if I had been taken out of the river.



This home on the former Wilfred Street in Preston was the first residence of six of the British missionaries. Joseph Fielding, the seventh, stayed with his brother James.

Although I felt exquisite pain, and was in the greatest distress for some time, and cannot even now look back on the scene without feelings of horror, yet, by it I learned the power of the adversary, his enmity against the servants of God, and got some understanding of the invisible world. However, the Lord delivered us from the wrath of our spiritual enemies and blessed us exceedingly that day, and I had the pleasure . . . of baptizing nine individuals and hailing them brethren in the kingdom of God.⁶

Joseph Fielding also wrote of this experience, although, since he was staying with James, he was not present.⁷ He prefaced his remarks by saying that Isaac had long been troubled by evil spirits, even when they were in Canada. Joseph wrote, “It seemed plain to me that the Devil designed to destroy him if possible. . . .” Joseph explained that at that time the demons plagued Isaac to such an extent that they interfered with his ability to care for his family.

One of Joseph’s sisters, not believing that his experiences were real, had actually lectured Isaac about his behavior, but Joseph said he “was still much afflicted.” Joseph then pointed out that Isaac was “the first in our Neighborhood to be baptised into the Church of Latter-day Saints.” He added, “Soon after this he was ordained an Elder. During the Winter he preached and raised up a small [branch], and in the Spring he was set apart with others to go to England. Being still afflicted in his Body, as he said, the evil Sprits would sometimes press him, some times as if they would scratch him, etc.” Joseph described some of Isaac’s experiences in troubling detail.⁸

Isaac’s wife Mary had apparently promised the Lord, upon their conversion to the LDS Church, that if Isaac could be delivered from the evil spirits, she would agree to Isaac leaving her for missionary service.⁹

Joseph then began to describe the very events told by Elder Kimball:

Brother Hyde got up and [he and Elder Kimball] both laid their Hands on him and began to rebuke the Spirits. Bro. Kimball at least not fully believing Bro. R’s Testimony respecting his Case, and while he was praying his Speech began to falter, and he was thrown down on the Floor, and was in great Agony, so that the Sweat ran down his Face. All in an instant, he said, it appeared as if every Part of his Body was distorted, etc., to the utmost. It would have deprived him, he thought, of life in a few minutes, but Bro. H and K lifted him onto the Bed, laid their hands on him and rebuked them, but he did not fully recover from its Effects for a Day or two. Bro. H. Also received a severe grip on one Thigh. They could hear a Sound from them, i.e., the Evil Spirits, like the grating of Teeth, quite plainly.¹⁰

The First Baptisms Take Place at the River Ribble in Preston

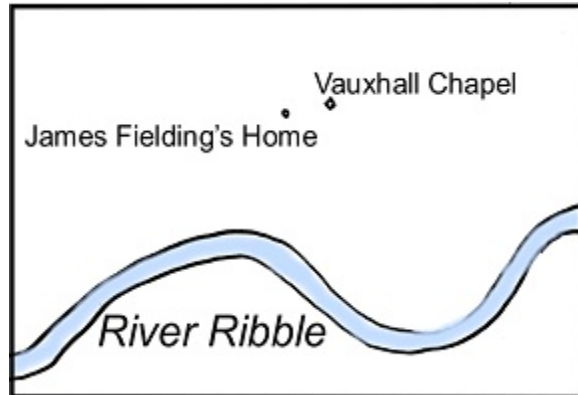
Despite this experience, the group managed to assemble at the River Ribble for baptisms. Elder Kimball delighted in telling about George Watt’s baptism:

Two of the candidates who were changing their clothes and preparing for baptism, at the distance of several rods from the place where I was standing in the water, being so anxious to obey the gospel that they ran with all their might to the water, each wishing to be baptized first. The younger being quicker of foot than the elder, out ran him, and came first into the water. . . . The circumstance of baptizing being somewhat novel, a large concourse of people assembled on the banks of the river to witness the ceremony.¹¹

Joseph Smith, who at this time was preaching in Toronto with John Taylor, Sidney Rigdon and senior apostle Thomas B. Marsh,¹² would later write about the baptisms after receiving information from the British missionaries. “About ten o’clock in the morning the brethren repaired

to the river Ribble, according to previous appointment, and, in the midst of a large collection of people, baptized nine individuals, one whom was George D. Watt, the first man baptized in England in this dispensation.”¹³

Joseph Fielding wrote in his diary, “George had been part of James’s Preston congregation for several years.”¹⁴ Two years earlier, in an 1835 letter to Joseph, Mary and Mercy in Toronto, Martha had written that George Watt and his wife “are a credit to our church.”¹⁵ Thomas Walmsley, who became a close friend of Joseph Fielding, was also baptized that day.

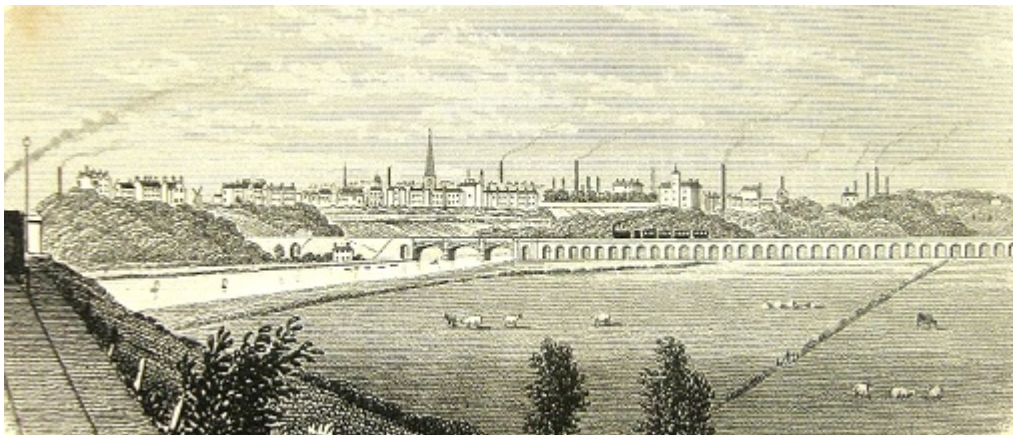


This photo provided by Keith Foulger shows the area along the River Ribble where the first LDS baptisms took place.

The River Ribble was less than a half mile from the area where the missionaries lived.



George D. Watt raced to the river to be the first baptized.



This 1855 drawing of Preston shows the city from the south. The River Ribble is on the left.

Joseph Fielding believed that the encounter with evil earlier that morning had “appeared to . . . prevent Bro. R. from preaching according to the Appointment that Day in the Market Place.” However, Isaac was determined to fill his assignment.

Elder Kimball wrote that “Elder Russel preached in the Market Place, standing on the Obelisk, to a very large congregation, numbers of whom were pricked to the heart.”¹⁶ Joseph explained that the manifestations of the morning did not deter the missionaries. “This design however was frustrated. Bro. R. preached and Bro. Goodson bore Testimony after him; I myself also spoke to a few People in a private house.”¹⁷

The Preston Obelisk

This historic location at the market place in Preston was where many other preachers, likely for centuries, had stood to teach. The obelisk, unfamiliar to Americans, is a common feature in English towns.

The practice of building crosses in the market place originated with the Anglo-Saxon pagans. Some of their obelisks still stand today, but many have deteriorated.¹⁸



This 1844 drawing shows the Preston obelisk where the first LDS missionaries preached. The original Saxon obelisk had been rebuilt in 1782. This one was torn down in 1852, but was also rebuilt.

In the case of the Preston obelisk, the Saxon original was replaced in 1782. Eight years later, in 1790, John Wesley stood on the steps of the new obelisk and taught his Methodist doctrine. That



Gordon B. Hinckley, during his first week in Preston as a young elder, stood to preach from the second Preston obelisk.

obelisk was the same market cross where the early Mormon elders preached, but was torn down in 1852,¹⁹ and at some point a new obelisk was erected.



This third obelisk, standing on the same spot as the original Saxon pillar, is the site where many Mormon missionaries preach today. Thanks to Keith Foulger for this photograph.

It was at this third obelisk in 1933 that a young Gordon Bitner Hinckley, in England less than a week, was asked as a missionary to stand on the obelisk steps and preach. Gordon, five feet ten inches tall, weighing one hundred and forty-three



This market cross in Leighton Buzzard, 6 miles from Bedford, was rebuilt in the 1600s.

pounds, replied, “You’ve got the wrong man.” Encouraged by his companion, he later said he “was terrified.”²⁰ Today this location is a common preaching area for LDS missionaries.

That evening, Joseph Fielding recorded another experience the missionaries had with evil:

On Sunday night Brother Russel was again greatly troubled in the same manner, and got Bro. Richards who slept with him, to go up to Bro. K and H. and request them to come down to his relief. Here I am not certain whether it was before or after, but about this time, as Bro. Hyde declared, as he and Bro. Kimball were lying in Bed, himself being awake he saw as it were a host of these foul Spirits not on the Floor, but as it were in the Midst of the Room, in various Shapes and Forms; some like naked Women, misshapen, and ugly, some like Cats with half a head, etc., and others half of one Creature and half another, the most miserable and disgusting appearances one could possibly imagine. They however kept their Distance, but turned their heads toward Bro. Hyde; one looking at him said distinctly, but with a murmuring tone, slowly demure, I never spoke against you. He said there seemed to be a legion of them. He was alarmed, but very much disgusted. He could scarcely bear to speak of them. . . . Upon the whole we got considerable Instruction from the Maneuvers of the Devil. The Spirit of the Devil produced Confusion, Disorder and Misery; the Spirit of God produces Calmness, Order and Happiness. If we never before knew that there were evil Spirits, we did now. We also knew how to feel for dear Bro. Russel.²¹

On Monday the group held another baptism. Joseph wrote, “I for the first time administered the Ordinance of Baptism to 7 or 8 men.”

Elder Kimball wrote about a council meeting the missionaries held on the last day of July, 1837:

Elders Goodson and Richards were appointed to go to the city of Bedford, there being a good prospect, from the information received, of a church being built up in that city. Elders Russel and Snider were appointed to go to Alston in Cumberland, near the borders of Scotland, and Elders Hyde, Fielding and myself were to remain in Preston and the regions round about. The next day [Tuesday, August 1st], the brethren took their departure for the different fields of labor assigned them.²²



On August 1st, 1837, four missionaries left Preston for different assignments.

Missionaries are Sent to Bedford, Birthplace of Joseph Fielding

If Joseph had regrets that John Goodson and Willard Richards were going to Bedford, the place of his birth, instead of himself, he did not mention this. However, Joseph was the source of the good prospects mentioned, as the communications with his brother-in-law Timothy Matthews had been encouraging. Joseph simply wrote:

Monday night previous to our separation, we spent in Prayer, etc., set apart Bro. Goodson and Richards to go to Bedford. The Lord was present with us. In the morning they took their Journey, and on the same day, Bro. Russel and Snyder left us . . . Elder Kimball, Elder Hyde, and myself were now left in Preston.²³

Joseph Fielding Remains in Preston; James Fielding Rejects His Message

Joseph, while sleeping in an extra bed at his brother's home, ate his meals at his sister Martha's home and she paid to have his washing done, for which he was grateful. Joseph wrote:

Sister Martha is still very kind; she delights to feed me and give me Money according to her Power. [She] has carefully avoided saying anything against us. I pray the Lord to bless her.

On the other hand, James appeared to be very angry with Joseph and the missionaries. Joseph wrote:

[He] was very much opposed to us. [On Saturday morning of the 5th of August], as we were sitting down to breakfast, he began to say very hard things of us and the Book of Mormon. I was much grieved and it appeared that I could not eat. I got up from the table, took the book in my hand and declared to all, him in particular, that what we had told them was the truth, that that book was of God, and that he would have to repent, and then left the house, from which time I have not been much in his company. When I go to his house he will scarcely speak to me.

From James's 1835 letter to Joseph in Toronto, there is no question that James was intimately acquainted with Joseph's religious beliefs. He clearly knew that Joseph chose to lose his position in the Methodist Church rather than deny his beliefs that the truth did not lie with Methodism. He had read Joseph's letters after his conversion to the LDS Church. James's invitation for Joseph to preach to his congregation would have been accompanied with a distinct knowledge of what Joseph was going to preach. He was perhaps even excited at the thought of how delighted his congregation would be upon hearing Joseph's message and then recognizing the similarities of Joseph's teachings to what James had been preaching from the New Testament. Perhaps James believed his congregation would revere him, see him as a prophet who had for at least two years been using scriptures which foretold of this.

James's 1835 letter to Joseph included a sermon on the body of Christ from Corinthians. At that time he wrote:

All the sects in the world joined do not make the body of Christ. A body is *visible* unity, not an invisible fancy. . . . then what sect is the Body? Where are the hands, the Apostles ministering the Spirit and blessing? Where are the feet, the evangelists, in the power of Philip? Where the mouth, the prophet? . . . Where then is the *temple* of the Holy Ghost now? The visible glory, the manifest unity, the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, the building fitly framed and joined by the Holy Ghost? A ruin. But the city and the temple shall be rebuilt according to the promise of God & on its own foundations. Where then is the Church, the body? Where the foundations are. Where is the rebuilding? Where the foundations of Apostles and Prophets called and sent by Jesus Christ the chief corner Stone are believed and received and by the Holy Ghost built upon.²⁴

James's negative reaction after Joseph's preaching was likely accompanied with the realization that James was either going to have to embrace this new church of which Joseph preached and leave his paid ministerial position, or reject Joseph's message. As James watched his dwindling congregation which had been prepared to hear Joseph's message through James's own words, he was possibly filled with regret, anger and perhaps some pride in himself instead of the necessary humility required to have Joseph's message confirmed to him by the Holy Ghost of which he had so often spoken.

The Three Missionaries in Preston Face Opposition

Elder Kimball wrote:

Brothers Hyde, Fielding and myself continued lifting up our voices in private houses, at the corners of the streets, in the Market place, and wherever the Lord opened a door. The following Sabbath [August 6th], Elder Hyde preached in the Market place to a numerous assemblage both rich and poor, who flocked from all parts to hear 'what these babblers had to say,' hearing that we were 'setters forth of strange doctrines.' After Brother Hyde had got through, I gave an exhortation, and when I had concluded, a minister stepped forward to oppose us on the doctrines we advance, but more particularly on the doctrine of baptism; he being a great stickler for infant baptism. The people, thinking he intended to offend us, would not let him proceed, but seemed determined to put him down, and undoubtedly would have done so, had not Brother Hyde interposed and begged permission for the gentleman to speak, and told the congregation that he was prepared to meet any arguments he might advance. This appeased the people, who listened to the remarks of the Rev. Gentleman, after which Brother Hyde spoke in answer to the objections which had been offered, to the satisfaction of nearly all present, and the minister felt somewhat ashamed. One individual came up to him and asked him what he now thought of his 'Baby Baptism,' while another took him by the hand and led him out of the throng. Indeed, all those who rose up to oppose the doctrines we taught were confounded, and could not with any success whatever combat the truths we preached.²⁵

At this same time Joseph wrote. "We have great cause for thankfulness; the Lord has answered our Prayers and has blessed and prospered us in our Work. . . . We have been baptizing from time to time the best of my brother's members [who] have joined us, and others of them are still coming."²⁶

Elder Kimball wrote that they met often at Sister Ann Dawson's home, a widow with whom he and Elder Hyde boarded after the other four missionaries had departed Preston.²⁷ As part of their living arrangements, the missionaries bought their own food, which Sister Dawson cooked. They paid two shillings per week, which was apparently half what Sister Dawson could have charged, and this included coal for their fires. The investigators and new members "contributed liberally of their substance, and many blessings of a temporal nature," which sustained the missionaries.²⁸

Joseph added:

The church having come together, we fully explained to them the nature of that ordinance, and then laid our hands upon them, for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and confirmed between forty and fifty. . . . While attending to this ordinance the spirit of the Lord rested down upon us in a powerful manner, which caused us to rejoice exceedingly. Thus the work of the Lord spread and prevailed.²⁹

The History of the Church recorded a few details of this time:

[Most of those baptized had] been members of Mr. James Fielding's church, so mightily grew the word, this being only the third Sabbath of the brethren in Preston. Mr. Fielding persecuted and called the Elders 'thieves, sheep stealers,' etc., acknowledging them good judges, having 'stolen all the best of his flock.' Sister Dawson (a widow) kindly received the Elders into her house and lodged them, which was a great blessing to the brethren, as they were quite destitute, most of the people extremely poor, and lodgings scarce; while they went from house to house as invited, to procure their daily meals.³⁰

With their numbers growing, they could no longer meet in private homes where some of their teaching had taken place. Joseph Fielding explained:

We have held our Meeting, for preaching, for the two last Sundays in the open air, and there administered the Sacrament, and have been very comfortable, having near 40 members. . . . The People here are many of them poor, and not many rich will come in at the straight gate.³¹

This branch, which was established with forty people late in the summer of 1837, was divided within just a few months and has been divided countless times since. Today, Preston holds the longest operating unit of the Church anywhere in the world. An LDS Temple, dedicated in 1994 by Gordon B. Hinckley, then a counselor in the First Presidency, is in Chorley, ten miles south of Preston.

Elder Kimball Preaches in Walker Fold

Not long after their arrival in Preston, Joseph wrote that Elder Kimball and Elder Hyde, "met with a young woman whose heart the Lord opened so that she received our testimony and was Baptized before she left Town to go home to Walker Fold, from whence her Father sent an Invitation to Bro. Kimball to come and preach in his Church."³²

Elder Kimball had taught her and a few days later he baptized her and then confirmed her at the water's edge. She asked for prayers in her behalf as she returned home, as her father was a Presbyterian minister, prayers which Joseph and Heber offered. The next week a letter arrived from her father inviting Elder Kimball to preach to his congregation. He wrote, "Although we be strangers to one another, I hope we are not strangers to our blessed Redeemer, else I would not have given out for you to preach."³³



The Walker Fold chapel where Jennetta Richards father preached.

While Heber and Joseph did not name her, Joseph Smith did. This woman was Jennetta Richards, just twenty years old. The History of the Church states she was the first person confirmed in England.³⁴ Shortly after her baptism. Elder Kimball wrote Willard Richards in Bedford, saying, "Willard, I baptized your wife today."³⁵ Jennetta and Elder Richards would not meet until the following year.

On Saturday the 12th of August, Elder Kimball traveled by stage coach to Walker Fold, arriving at the minister's home just before dark. He was greeted with these words, "I understand you are the minister lately from America." Heber was fed dinner, and then "commenced in a conversation which lasted till a later hour, which appeared satisfactory to the whole family."

Elder Kimball stayed at the minister's home. He wrote, "the next morning . . . [I] commenced to preach to an overflowing congregation on the principles of salvation. I likewise preached in the afternoon and evening, and they seemed to manifest great interest in the things which I laid before them. Nearly the whole congregation were melted down into tears." The minister invited Heber to speak Monday evening, and again on Wednesday. Elder Kimball continued:

A number now began to believe the doctrines I advanced, and on Thursday six individuals, all members of Mr. Richards' church came forward for baptism. Mr. Richards, now seeing the effect which my preaching produced, and fearing lest he should lose all his members, and likewise his salary, which was allowed him for preaching, told me that he must close the doors of his chapel against me, but at the same time his behavior was kind, and to his praise be it spoke, treated me with the greatest hospitality.

As a result, Heber began preaching in private homes, and during the week Mr. Richards "frequently came" to hear him preach. The following Sunday Heber "went along with him to his meeting, feeling a desire to hear him preach." Elder Kimball continued:

After he had finished his discourse, I was surprised to hear him give out another appointment for me to preach in his chapel. I accordingly preached in the afternoon and in the evening, and the word seemed to be with power. . . and the next day I baptized two more, both members of Mr. Richards' church. Although Mr. Richards had preached in that place upwards of thirty years, and his members, as well as the inhabitants of the place, and vicinity, were very much attached to him, yet when the fulness of the gospel was preached, although in much weakness, the people. . . being convinced of their duty, came

forward and followed the footsteps of the Savior, by being buried in the likeness of his death.³⁶

After Mr. Richards had let me preach in his chapel, I baptized . . . most of the members of his church. He then . . . told me that I had ruined his church and had taken away all his young members. I could not but feel for the old gentleman, but I had a duty to perform which outweighed every other consideration, and I was assured that if I sought to please man I should not be the servant of Christ.³⁷

In the absence of all his associates, Joseph Fielding preached one Sunday in nearby Walton. “A goodly number came to hear but gave me no further invitation. They are very worldly minded. They have what they call a fine Man in the Church, and they are well content.” Joseph added, “My Bro. James will scarcely speak to me, so I feel rather lonely.”³⁸

Chapter 9 Endnotes, Pages 134-146:

1.This letter is the ninth letter in the Mary Fielding Smith Collection. I have transcribed it from a copy of the original. There are tears and smudges in the letter, and in a few cases I have updated the punctuation.

2.Joanna Southcott, born in 1750, believed she possessed supernatural gifts. She was contemporary with John Fielding, the father of James and Joseph. About the time John began preaching in Bedford, Joanna began preaching in London and began to select the 144,000 righteous mentioned in the Book of Revelation, apparently charging the applicant a fee for this salvation. While in her sixties, she stated she was pregnant with the Messiah. She died a few months later, in December 1814.

3.This letter from James was written in 1845, several months after he learned of the death of Hyrum Smith, Mary’s husband. It is the tenth and last letter in the Fielding Family Letters Collection. James named the minister, “Coughy, pronounced Hie.” Mr. Coughy does not even merit a footnote in Wikipedia today.

4.The imagery here is that of a man pounding the lid on a coffin. Boring the holes is what one does before hammering the nail. Clinching is the act of bending the tip of the nail after it has been placed so it cannot be removed.

5.Joseph Fielding Diary, page 6. The practice of a missionary washing his feet, or shaking the dust from his shoes after being rejected is known from both the New Testament and the Doctrine and Covenants. See D&C 60:15; Matthew 10:14.

6.Journal of Heber C. Kimball, page 19.

7.Pictures of LDS Church history sites in England can be found in a December 1979 Ensign article titled “The Way It Looks Today: A Camera Tour of Church History Sites in Great Britain,” which can be found at this link: <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1979/12/the-way-it-looks-today-a-camera-tour-of-church-history-sites-in-great-britain?lang=eng>. Elder Kimball, in his journal published in 1840, stated that “Brother Goodsen having found a room where we could be accommodated, which belonged to a widow woman, situation in Wilford street, we moved our baggage there.” Elder Kimball named the street Wilford. Other sources say Wilfred. In any case, I cannot locate either street from Google Maps.

8.In reading about Elder Kimball’s description of this event, and then reading Joseph Fielding’s words, I was quite dismayed. It didn’t help that my computer shut down on its own as I finished that particular sentence.

9.Mary Russell to Isaac Russell, 17 July 1837. "I assure you it has been a time of severe trial for me to part with you. Was it not for the suffering we have been called to pass thru and the promises that I made to the Lord that if he would deliver you out of that state of suffering I would give you up." A transcription of this letter is held in the Isaac Russell Correspondence Collection at BYU, MSS 497.

10.Joseph Fielding Diary, pages 7-8.

11.Journal of Heber C. Kimball, pages 19-20.

12.Life of John Taylor, page 42.

13.History of the Church, Volume II, pages 503-504.

14.Joseph Fielding Diary, page 6.

15.I have referred to this letter several times. Mercy wrote to Joseph, Mary and Mercy from Preston in the fall of 1835. This letter is the fourth in the Fielding Family Letters Collection.

16.Journal of Heber C. Kimball, page 20.

17.Joseph Fielding Diary, page 7-8.

18.Since this was my own conclusion based on a memory of an Anglo-Saxon cross which stands outside the chapel in Biddisham, Somerset County, where my ancestor James Millard was christened in 1827, I verified this with my knowledgeable British friend and scholar Christine Skelton. She replied to my email by saying, "Lots of ancient towns and villages had obelisks of some kind. These were in place long before Christianity reached these shores and were pagan worship sites. When Christianity came along, many churches were built near an obelisk so that the people could worship in church but not feel too far removed from their pagan roots. (A kind, gentle way of weaning them from their pagan comfort zone.) We still see many churches built on tops of hills or other places where they are in full view. These are frequently on old pagan sites. We have a church in Yorkshire and their obelisk is in the graveyard just outside the church."

19.History of the Borough of Preston, page 247. "This [the original] obelisk, or market cross, was taken down and another erected in 1782. The latter was removed in 1852. The site at present [1857] remains unoccupied."

20.Go Forward With Faith, the Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley, by Sheri L. Dew, Deseret Book: 1996, page 62.

21.Joseph Fielding Diary, page 8.

22.Journal of Heber C. Kimball, page 20.

23.Joseph Fielding Diary, pages 6-7. Joseph actually wrote, "Bro. Russel and Snyder left us to go 150 miles North." However, Alston is only 90 miles north. Bedford is about 150-160 miles south, and he might have been tired as he wrote in his journal.

24.James Fielding Letter, referenced earlier.

25.Journal of Heber C. Kimball, pages 20-21. This same account was repeated in different detail to John Goodson who was serving in Bedford. John wrote to Isaac Russell and told of the Preston experience. This letter dated 14 August 1837, is preserved in the Isaac Russell Collection, MSS 497, held in the Special Collections Vault at BYU.

26.Joseph Fielding Diary, page 8.

27.Photo Essay of Church History Sites in Liverpool and the Ribble Valley, by Craig James Ostler.

28. Journal of Heber C. Kimball, page 40.

29. Journal of Heber C. Kimball, page 21. This journal states that they held the confirmation on the second Sabbath, but August 6th was clearly the third Sabbath they were in Preston, and interestingly, the History of the Church for this date clearly states that this was the third Sabbath, a detail I needed in trying to keep their calendar straight.

30. History of the Church, Volume II, page 506.

31. Joseph Fielding Diary, page 9.

32. Joseph Fielding Diary, page 6.

33. Journal of Heber C. Kimball, page 22; Joseph Fielding Diary, page 8.

34. History of the Church, Volume II, page 504, August 4th, 1837. "Elder Kimball baptized Jennetta Richards at Preston, daughter of the Rev. John Richards, of Walkerfold, Chaidgley, fifteen miles from Preston, and confirmed her at the water side. This was the first confirmation in England. Sister Richards returned home the day following, Saturday, 5th, and persuaded her father to write to Elder Kimball to come and preach in his chapel." I had trouble reconciling dates with Joseph Fielding's and Heber C. Kimball's writings, but this entry from the History of the Church cleared up that detail. Most writers of that time period spelled the name of the town Walkerfold. Except in this endnote, I have quietly changed all spellings to Walker Fold, the correct name.

35. Truth Will Prevail, page 90.

36. Journal of Heber C. Kimball, page 23.

37. Journal of Heber C. Kimball, page 52.

38. Joseph Fielding Diary, page 9.