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## EARLY CHURCH HISTORY IN ENGLAND

The following letter gives an interesting account of a visit to Preston, England, in February last, by Elder Robert Aveson, who has lately returned to his mountain home.

Having a desire to attend the Liverpool conference, and to take a view of sights of early Church history. I left Patricroft, Sunday, February 17th, walked to Monton Green, about a mile, and then took the train for Blackburn, via Wigan. Having to wait at Wigan nearly half an hour, an acquaintance I had made on the route showed me around a portion of the old town. I took a glimpse of the old parish church, the market place and a few other attractions; then back to the station we went, and continuing our journey Blackburn was soon reached. A gentleman on the train took me to Clayton street, where the conference was being held. There was a fair-sized audience of Saints and few strangers, and twenty Elders from Utah, including Apostle A. H. Lund. An excellent spirit prevailed, a very sociable time spent and some edifying instructions given by Elder Lund and several other Elders. All felt to rejoice for the divine influence they enjoyed. According to the report of the labors of the Elders for the past six months, there had been over 18,000 tracts distributed and twelve baptisms performed. This number of baptisms compares favorably with other conferences of the size that have been held recently.

Statistics show that Blackburn has a population of over 120,000 inhabitants. The main industries are ironworks, cotton mills and collieries. On account of the recent cold weather there has been, and is now, much distress in that town as well as hundreds of other towns. Soup kitchens have been opened and other ways provided for the destitute poor. I have witnessed so many scenes of poverty in this land since my arrival here, my heart has often ached, and caused me to look forward to the time when my mission here would be finished and I should return to the loved scenes of Utah.

Oh, ye mountains high, where the clear blue sky

Arches over the vales of the free;  
Where the pure breezes blow  
And the clear streamlets flow,  
How I've longed to your bosom to flee.

A missionary, amongst the many experiences he passes through, impressively learns one lesson as dear to him as any other, and that is to appreciate his mountain home.

The next day, Monday, February 18th I went to Preston, an old town of about

108,000 inhabitants. The day following, in company with H. C. Boden, V. P. Wells and M. A. Ronney, spent a great portion of the day in viewing the sights of Preston, principally those which pertain to Church history, as it was in that town where the Gospel was first preached in England. Elder Boden, who is president of the Liverpool conference, was our guide. It was a beautiful morning.

Before entering into details concerning our visit it may be well to state that the first Elders set apart for a foreign mission were Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde, June 1st 1837. These brethren in company with J. Fielding, Willard Richards, J. Goodson, I. Russell and J. Snider, sailed from New York for England, on the ship *Garrick*, July 1st 1837, and arrived at Liverpool on the 18th of the same month. After a three days' stay at Liverpool, being prompted by the Spirit, they went to Preston, and it was here where they witnessed the first fruits of the Gospel. They lodged at the house of a widow in Saint Wilford street. Brother Fielding went in search of his brother, a minister residing in that town, and soon afterward found him. The following morning (Sunday) the brethren went to hear the Rev. Mr. Fielding preach in his chapel, and at the close of the service (without being requested by them) he gave out an appointment for the Elders to preach in the afternoon. Elder Kimball was chosen to address the congregation. The Elders also occupied the stand in the evening and the following Wednesday evening. Learning that a number of his flock had become converted to the new faith, the Rev. Mr. Fielding shut his doors against the Elders preaching their doctrines, but afterwards again gave them the privilege of speaking in his chapel. The result was that ere many days elapsed a large number received the truth and were baptized.

To proceed with our visit—we soon approached the Old Flag Market, the noted spot where Elder I. Russell, a few days after their arrival in Preston, delivered the first sermon in the open air to a large congregation, many of whom were "pricked to the heart." It is situated on Cheapside. Adjoining this market place is the town hall, a large massive rock structure. Just at this moment the ponderous bell at the hall pealed twelve 'Twas a doleful sound. We were informed that at the request of the citizens the bell is muffled to a certain extent, on account of the loud noise it makes. Not long ago, a gentleman residing in Preston, who was lying dangerously ill—a man of wealth—sent word to the mayor and had the clock stopped for several days.

Entering this large building we were kindly shown through various rooms. There is a very large room used for dancing parties, entertainments, lectures, etc.; looked in the mayor's room, council room, committee room, and other apartments; also the regalia art room, where were exhibited some excellent oil engravings.

The next sight which attracted our attention, a short distance further on, was the famous "cock-pit," where the first conference of the Church of Jesus Christ was held in this country. At that time it was a large and commodious brick building. It had been formerly used by the people to witness the sport of cock-fighting. Hundreds of people had often shouted their huzzas in honor of the barbarous sport. It had been latterly used as a temperance hall, but what a contrast when the Gospel of Christ was preached and the songs of praise sung. The old building is very badly demolished, the only remains left being the west wall (nearly complete) and a portion of the north wall. Much has been said concerning this old relic, and oftentimes has it been viewed, especially by the missionaries to England. There is nothing particular to see about it, in fact I think there is less of note than any sight I ever saw. But its fame has brought the sightseer to take a view of it in order to satisfy his curiosity. Elder Kimball and party rented this hall for nine shillings per week, and they held meetings there. As before stated, it was in this building the first conference was held. Christmas of 1837 was the day on which it convened.

About twenty rods from the "cock-pit" is the old parish church. The first building erected on this sacred spot was built about A. D. 670. Since that time it appears that the old portion has been removed and a new one built in its stead. We did not learn when the present building was erected, but judging from the condition of the structure it can be clearly seen that it is not a very lengthy period.

We proceeded from thence to the Vauxhall chapel. It is situated on a road by that name—Vauxhall road. It stands a few yards back from the street, and is enclosed with a fence. The building is a very plain one, built of brick, two stories. Carved on a rock slab above the door is an inscription. "Particular Baptist Church." A lady of about forty summers, residing next door to the chapel, kindly admitted us in the building. We went into the pulpit where Elder Heber C. Kimball delivered his first sermon in Great Britain. It was here, to a good-sized audience, where the glad tidings were proclaimed of the glorious Gospel which had been