

DEDICATING A LAND OF PROMISE

On June 28, 1962, fourteen Americans with roots in Utah traveled to the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu in the heart of the Andes for spiritual renewal and guidance. What they were about to experience would be unforgettable. Leaving the congestion and hassle of Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; Lima, Peru; Montevideo, Uruguay; and São Paulo and Curitiba, Brazil, these mission presidents and their wives felt the peace and tranquillity of the mountains of Peru. They came to gain strength from each other. They came for ideas and help. They came to rededicate themselves to the preaching of the gospel.

All were under significant self-imposed pressure. They believed their responsibility was to preach the gospel to as many of the millions of people in South America as possible, many of

whom traced their origins beyond the sixteenth-century conquest by the Spanish and Portuguese. The indigenous populations were believed to be direct descendants of peoples who left the Old World during three different periods before the time of Christ. These direct descendants of the house of Israel had been promised in the Book of Mormon that they would accept the gospel in large numbers and again become a mighty people. In addition, this group of mission presidents and their wives felt a responsibility to take the gospel to the millions of immigrants from Europe who came to South America in search of political and economic freedom. It was indeed a daunting task.

With great anticipation, the small group gathered in the mountains. The flight from Lima, Peru, to the ancient Inca capital of Cuzco was both frightening and awe-inspiring. Leaving the coast of Peru and flying into the majestic Andes left them overwhelmed by the beauty but also concerned with the pilot's ability to maneuver among the high peaks. Descending from the plane at the small Cuzco airport, the passengers immediately recognized they were in the land of the ancient Inca, as most of the population displayed distinct indigenous features. They were impressed by this city at the top of the Andes. They also noticed the change in the oxygen content at more than 11,000 feet, experiencing shortness of breath and headaches. The few hours of needed rest before doing any physical activity were not easy as these Americans were eager to explore this ancient town.

Their final destination was still many miles away. After a good night's rest, the group took an early train, traveling northwest. Getting out of the valley in which Cuzco was situated was not easy as the train went through several switchbacks, taking them higher up the mountain before descending to the ruins of Machu Picchu. The three-hour trip took them past numerous ruins, small villages, and farms changed only slightly by centuries of technological advances. After a couple of hours, the scant foliage of the high mountain desert turned to tropi-

cal vegetation. The dry, cool air of the mountains was replaced with heat and humidity. At the base of Machu Picchu, they boarded a bus that took a switchback climb of two thousand feet in five miles. The driver took particular delight in maneuvering the bus as close as possible to the edge of the road so the nervous tourists saw more of the slope than desired. Once arriving on top, the fear was immediately replaced with awe and reverence as they saw the majestic beauty of Machu Picchu.

After checking into the small hotel on the mountain, they went exploring. For a few hours a professional guide took them around the ruins. What they saw was one of the most significant archaeological ruins of the Americas. Built as a royal estate and religious retreat by the fifteenth-century ruler of the Incas, Pachacuti Inca, this city carved out of the mountaintop was impressive in its sophistication and beauty. It remained hidden from the conquering population of Peru until 1911 when Yale scholar Hiram Bingham happened onto the ruins while searching for another city. He uncovered and partly rebuilt the site, which became a major tourist destination for visitors worldwide.

After the tour, a hike up the trail on the adjacent mountain called Huayna Picchu was too tempting for most of the group. They began moving up a somewhat dangerous trail, and Sister Marné Tuttle stated, "I'm frightened to think that one slight misstep and one would have fallen a thousand feet or more before stopping."¹ After reaching the top of Huayna Picchu, they returned to their hotel just before dark. A later descent could have been dangerous as the darkness of evening in the Andes

1. A description of the visit was kept in great detail by Marné Tuttle in a secretarial notebook. Most of the notes were written in shorthand and transcribed by her for the author in 2000 (Marné Tuttle notes, June 28, 1962; copy in author's possession). Extensive notes of this meeting were also kept by Fawn Sharp, wife of James Vernon Sharp, president of the Andes Mission and printed in her autobiography (see Fawn Hansen Sharp, *Life History of Fawn Hansen Sharp* (n.p., n.d), 128–32; copy in Church History Library, Salt Lake City). The source for the description of this visit primarily comes from the notes kept by Marné Tuttle. Other sources will be noted.

left the trail almost un navigable. The group ate dinner, held a short meeting, and went to bed tired and sunburned.

The morning beckoned some from bed to see the first sunbeams over the Andes. Sister Tuttle climbed to the highest terrace of the ruins to observe the sunrise and wondered, "What could have motivated a civilization to live in this manner and then to leave it?" They were surprised to find the ground



Mission presidents and wives at Machu Picchu,
June 28, 1962

covered with small wild strawberries that were exceptionally sweet. At ten o'clock all gathered in a secluded place where they could sing and talk without being too disturbed. A passerby took the picture of the group on the left.

At 10:30 a meeting began that those present would never forget.

Conducting was Elder A. Theodore Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy and president of the South American Mission, with responsibility for all missionary work in South America. After a prayer C. Laird Snelgrove, president of the Argentine Mission, and his wife, Edna, expressed the feelings of all present by describing their emotions contemplating the grandeur and physical beauty of the Andes while recognizing the insignificance of man in comparison. He said the beauty of the ruins reminded him of the magnitude of the responsibility they had. President Finn Paulsen and his wife, Sarah, who presided over the southern part of Brazil, alluded to a difficult year they had experienced, being away from home when loved ones were ill or dying. Yet through it all, they knew their responsibility was to serve the people of South America.

President William Grant Bangerter and his wife, Geraldine, of the Brazilian Mission, shared how the beauty and history of

this spot touched them with the Holy Ghost. They suggested that this same Spirit should go with all of them as they strove to fulfill their responsibilities as mission presidents. President A. Delbert Palmer and his wife, Mable, responsible for the new Chilean Mission, talked of the Book of Mormon prophets and how their influence was still felt, alluding to the sense of urgency they felt toward missionary work. President J. Thomas Fyans and his wife, Helen, of the Uruguayan Mission, discussed the righteous heritage of the people who built Machu Picchu and suggested a similar heritage for all in attendance. President James Vernon Sharp and his wife, Fawn, of the Andes Mission headquartered in Lima, talked about the importance of Machu Picchu in their lives. President Sharp had passed close by this very spot at the end of his mission to Argentina in 1927 when Hiram Bingham was uncovering the ruins. President and Sister Sharp expressed appreciation for the experience of serving in Peru, which they would soon leave after three years of service. Finally Sister Tuttle suggested the beauty of the spot inspired her with the desire to be a better person and further dedicate her life to the Lord.

Elder Tuttle then talked about his tender feelings at seeing the conditions under which the people of South America lived: “When we see these people acting like beasts of burden, devoid of any hope, and realizing that we are the ones directing the missionaries to wipe this all away, it is a great responsibility that comes to us.” He suggested that all in attendance needed to do more to achieve this goal: “We have got to be different and even though it requires more sacrifice, more dedication, we ought to give it, and feel that we ought to, as that is what will help the work to go forward better.”

The group then gathered in a circle and knelt while Elder Tuttle pronounced a blessing for preaching the gospel in South America. The continent had been dedicated on December 25, 1925, at a park in Buenos Aires by Elder Melvin J. Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. That dedication focused

on the land and the people, but this prayer by Elder Tuttle centered on the work of the presidents and the missionaries. In the prayer Elder Tuttle declared that it was a special blessing to those who were responsible to take the gospel to this part of the world: “Oh, Father, give us the vision of Thy work, of what we must do and how we must organize and proceed so that we can do better what Thou hast called us to do.” He also expressed concern over the problems confronting the governments of South America and pronounced a special blessing on the countries: “Let not the power of communism take over these governments. We know and recognize the power in the countries over which we preside. Hold it in abeyance; Hedge up the way of those who would do wickedly. Raise up righteous men that they might have power and influence for good, that they might further the work of Thy Church in each of the countries where we should be.”²

After the prayer, many tears were shed and embraces extended. They had little desire to leave the beauty and serenity of the place. But life had to go on. This small group returned to the hotel and gathered their belongings for the return trip to Cuzco. The next morning they boarded an airplane to Lima, where they held three days of meetings that included discussions of issues of missionary work and the technical aspects of their responsibilities.

Those in attendance proclaimed this experience to be one of the highlights of their lives. The Spirit was strong, and feelings of love and devotion intense. In their minds the importance of what happened in the Andes that day cannot be overstated. First, going to Machu Picchu had long been a pilgrimage experience for missionaries and mission presidents leaving Latin America, in part because of the Book of Mormon connection to the native population of the Americas. After having worked with the remnants of this population, who in the twentieth century displayed little of the grandeur found in the

2. A copy of the prayer is found in appendix B.

Book of Mormon, Machu Picchu was visual proof that a great pre-Columbian society once existed in the Americas. Few worried that this complex of buildings was constructed close to a thousand years after the events that were described in the Book of Mormon; it still represented visual proof of a great culture. Elder Tuttle wrote at this time, “Everything is really old and remarkable and speaks the truth of Mormonism, there having been an advanced civilization here.”³

But more important, this experience was an act of rededication for them. There was a feeling among the participants that after this meeting the Church in South America was different. All the presidents of the seven missions had earlier served missions in Latin America, worked hard, and experienced limited success. Some even questioned why missionaries were being sent to this part of the world. This time in 1962 they felt different. The Spirit of the Lord was moving with great force and beauty across the countries of South America, and the result would be the fulfilment of promises made to the indigenous peoples more than two thousand years ago. It was a land of prophecy and promise. It was a time to hasten the Lord’s work.

The Church in South America

This was a remarkable assemblage of faithful Church members. Their distinction was to be recognized only in later years with most of them being called to positions of responsibility. But their leader was probably the most remarkable of men. Elder A. Theodore Tuttle had been a young schoolteacher working in seminaries and institutes in four different cities in the western part of the United States. He then worked as one of the administrators of the Church Educational System. In 1958, at the age of thirty-nine, he was called into the leadership of the Church as a member of the First Council of Seventy. He was given

3. “Manuscript History of the South American Mission,” June 27, 1962; Church History Library. This is a chronological description of Elder Tuttle’s activities.

responsibility in the missionary program of the Church working under Elder Gordon B. Hinckley. He became a friend and confidant of President Henry D. Moyle of the First Presidency, who was responsible for expanding missionary work. Moyle suggested that Tuttle be called to try an experiment in Church administration never before attempted, one of two General Authorities living away from Salt Lake City and administrating a geographic region of the Church from within the area. Elder Tuttle moved his family from Utah to the small country of Uruguay, where he became the fourth General Authority to live and work in South America, the first being Elder Parley P. Pratt, who served a four-month mission in Chile. The second and third were Elders Melvin J. Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve and Rey L. Pratt of the First Quorum of Seventy, who in 1925 spent six months in Argentina, opening the continent to missionary work.⁴

Elder Tuttle was aware of the missions of his predecessors, especially that of Elder Ballard. He knew Elder Ballard's mission to South America had limited success and that the Church had experienced little growth in the thirty-five years since. He was familiar with the dedicatory prayer offered on a hot Christmas day in 1925, when Elder Ballard talked of the promises made to the descendants of Israel, the indigenous population of the Americas. Elder Tuttle was also aware of the prophecy six months later as Elder Ballard was leaving his mission in which he suggested first a struggle to establish the Church and then significant growth as the Church matured and developed: "The work of the Lord will grow slowly for a time here just as an oak grows slowly from an acorn. It will not shoot up in a day as does the sunflower that grows quickly and then dies. But thousands will join the Church. It will be divided into more than

4. Elder Rulon S. Wells of the First Council of Seventy accompanied Elders Ballard and Pratt to Argentina but immediately became seriously ill and within a month returned home.

one mission and will be one of the strongest in the Church. . . . The South American Mission will be a power in the Church.”⁵

The Church was still in the first phase of slow growth and development when Elder Tuttle came to South America. But it was maturing, establishing strong roots, particularly in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, and was ready to move into the next phase of the prophecy. Elder Tuttle believed his role in South America would be to establish the spirit and methods to fulfill Elder Ballard’s prophecy. He was determined to take the Church from a young oak to a mature tree.

The first attempt to establish the Church in South America was in 1851 when Elder Parley P. Pratt went to Chile. He returned home after four months without converting anyone and with a conviction South America was not ready for the gospel. With the mission of Elder Ballard and Elder Pratt to Argentina in 1925–26, the Church in South America was established, but with small, weak congregations. Expansion into Brazil in 1928 resulted in similar limited success. The Church grew slowly, seriously affected by the historical events of the time, particularly the Second World War and the Korean War. Small branches met in makeshift homes-turned-chapels run by American missionaries. Found within these branches were seeds of faith and conviction, primarily among young members who had weathered storms of adversity and persecution to stay in the Church. These men and women would be the foundation of the Church upon which the next stage would be built.

South America was a distant outpost of a Church whose center and strength was in Utah. Few expected the Church would grow much in Latin America. The great missionary work of the nineteenth century had occurred in northern Europe. During the early twentieth century, ideas had settled in the minds of many members and some leaders that most of the descendants of Israel could be found in northern Europe. Few

5. As quoted in Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949), 100.

converts were expected from the southern European Catholic countries of Italy, Spain, and Portugal or the Latin American countries. Consequently, an erroneous belief developed that the gathering of Zion had already happened and that the Church was just waiting for a few last prophetic events to occur, such as the taking of the gospel to the Lamanites, before the final wrapping up events of this world.⁶

That belief began to change with the presidency of David O. McKay in 1951. President McKay believed there was much to be done before the Millennium, and he said much would yet occur away from the center of the Church in Salt Lake City. His world tour in the early 1950s brought the potential for a worldwide Church to the forefront. His emphasis on missionary work revitalized a program that in the past had experienced some challenges. But probably his most important decision was to have the Apostles visit the Church throughout the world. During his visit to South America, President McKay promised annual tours by General Authorities, and those visitors included Hugh B. Brown, Harold B. Lee, Henry D. Moyle, Mark E. Petersen, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Spencer W. Kimball. All returned to Salt Lake City with a better understanding of South America but, more important, with a feeling that there was potential for growth in the region.

What has happened in South America since President McKay's visit was something few expected. Though numbers do not always tell the entire story, they do indicate direction. In 1935, ten years after the first missionaries arrived in Argentina, there were 340 members on the continent. By the time of President McKay's 1954 visit, almost twenty years later, that number had increased only to 3,250 in four countries, Uruguay having been opened in 1947 and Paraguay in 1950.

6. For a discussion of these ideas, see Armand L. Mauss, "In Search of Ephraim: Traditional Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race," *Journal of Mormon History* 25 (Spring 1999): 131–73; Arnold H. Green, "Gathering and Election: Israelite Descent and Universalism in Mormon Discourse," *Journal of Mormon History* 25 (Spring 1999): 195–228.

Less than ten years later when Elder Tuttle arrived, a total of 15,475 members had joined the Church. When he left after four years, that number had doubled to 37,735. But more important within a couple years of Elder Tuttle's leaving, three stakes were organized in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. The foundation had been laid, and the Church was ready for an unprecedented transformation.

By the end of the twentieth century, the Church in Latin America had grown so much that a Latinization of the Church membership was occurring. Missionaries were in every country of South America, and the membership numbered almost two and a half million members, 23 percent of the total Church population (44 percent of the membership outside the United States)⁷. Nine South American countries were among the twenty countries in the world with the largest number of members. There were 560 stakes, 69 missions, and temples built or announced in every South American country except the three small Afro-South American countries of French Guiana, Guyana, and Suriname. Native leaders headed most of the ecclesiastical units of the Church, and thousands of local youth had served missions. These leaders were not only talented but also effective. This type of growth was not even dreamed of or imagined in 1962 as the mission presidents and their wives knelt in prayer at Machu Picchu on that wintry June day in 1962.⁸

Elder Tuttle's Influence

It is dangerous to suggest that the evolution of the Church in South America belongs to one person or one period. The

7. The figures come from the Church Statistical Department and from *Deseret News 2001–2002 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2000). These figures do not include the rest of Latin America. When these figures are included, Latin America is over 36 percent of the Church.

8. For a discussion of the growth, see Mark L. Grover, "Miracle of the Rose and the Oak in Latin America," in *Out of Obscurity: The Church in the Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 138–50.

growth of the Church is the result of a complex combination of factors. But in history there are always pivotal and important moments. Those events are rarely as dramatic as historians often suggest because there is always significant change that began before and a continuation of change afterward. But certain times, persons, or events do signal the end of an era and the beginning of the next. The Tuttle period can be considered one of those important periods.

The most significant effect of the years 1961–65 that Elder Tuttle spent in South America was the belief he created in the minds of General Authorities in Salt Lake City, missionaries, and local members that the Church in South America would develop into an organization equal to the Church in the United States. He was able to effect a change in the minds of the leadership in Salt Lake City that South America should no longer be considered an outpost but an important and integral part of the Church, participating and receiving all programs and contributing in all ways to the growth of the Church. Conversely, he was able to articulate a vision to the members and missionaries that the Church that existed in the United States could actually occur in South America. Not only did he give missionaries and members a vision of what could happen, but he established the plans for those goals to come to fruition. This significant change can be seen in at least seven ways.

1. *Advocacy for South America in Salt Lake City.* Because of the small size of the Church in South America, limited information had reached the leadership, bureaucracy, and membership of the Church. The few thousand members in South America were small in number compared to the membership in most other countries. As a result, South America was seldom written about in the magazines of the Church, and only limited information on the region was available to the membership in general. That all changed with Elder Tuttle.

He believed an important aspect of his responsibility was to be an advocate for South America within the leadership of

the Church. He had regular communication with numerous General Authorities. His visits to Salt Lake City for general conference during these five years were important and busy. During his time in Uruguay, he came to Salt Lake five times. His visits always included an interview with President David O. McKay describing what was happening in South America. He attended meetings with the Twelve Apostles where he was often asked to report on his activities. He occasionally represented the Seventy in meetings, and the topic of discussion was almost always the Church in South America. He constantly reminded Church leaders that South America was a land of prophecy. He was sought after for presentations and conversations throughout the Wasatch Front. During his five visits, he spoke at four general conferences. All four of his talks related to South America. His first talk in April of 1962 and his talk in April of 1964 had as a theme the growth and development of the Church in South America. These talks were informative and positive. He always talked about the potential for the Church in South America. He was a devotional speaker at Brigham Young University and at various other places around the valley. The excitement in his voice and the love he exhibited for the members were important factors in generating positive feelings and understanding about South America.

He also maintained contact with the bureaucracy with a significant number of letters and information sent from Uruguay. Those letters went to many different departments, not just the missionary department, which had been the practice. It took the form of requests for information, help, and assistance in the implementation of Church programs. His success as a General Authority with Church departments was much greater than it would have been for a mission president. It was much more problematic to question or turn down a General Authority. His activities in favor of programs and information for and about South America became known among the bureaucracy of the Church.

An important event in this advocacy to the Church was the publication of several articles about South America in the May 1963 issue of the *Improvement Era*. It was not just an article, but a special issue with eight different articles. A beautiful picture of Machu Picchu graced the cover, and many photos accompanied the articles. Elder Tuttle's introductory article highlighted the section, and there were separate writeups on each mission. It was a large section seldom reserved for other geographic regions, and it was one of the most important discussions about South America available to the Church. It was a signal that the Church there was becoming important.⁹

2. *Change in vision within South America.* A major difference in South America in the thirty-five-year history before Elder Tuttle's mission and the period after was a question of vision and perception. What occurred was a change in belief about what could happen there. It was almost impossible for members and missionaries to believe that the Church in South America could develop into an organization like the Church in Utah. Small congregations of single women, youth, and very few complete families who met in homes-turned-chapels were not the makings of ward and stake organizations. There was talk about stakes, temples, and welfare programs, but it was always about the Church in the United States. Few members had hopes of seeing those things in South America. Many, unable to wait, immigrated to the United States so they could participate in the full blessings of the gospel.

When Elder Tuttle spoke as a General Authority of changes that could occur, people believed him. His enthusiasm was catching. Members actually began to believe the Church could develop in the way he was describing. He gave them a vision of what could actually happen in the near future, not just a hope or dream in the distance. He and the mission presidents began to talk in time periods and dates of completion. The organiza-

9. Theodore A. Tuttle, "The Church in South America," *Improvement Era*, May 1963, 352-74.

tion of stakes were given dates for realization. It was not just idle talk; they believed he was setting achievable goals.

Important changes began to take place. The most important was the construction of chapels. Members had seen pictures of buildings in the United States but never in person. When chapels began to be built in South America that were large, spacious, and beautiful, like those in the States, they became tangible evidence of the fulfillment of Elder Tuttle's expectations. Along with chapel construction was the development of local leaders. When missionaries were taken out of leadership positions in the branches and districts in large numbers and members began functioning in their places, the dream of stakes became a possibility. When Elder Tuttle talked about his vision of the future and the members began to see the fulfillment of that vision, their perception of the Church in South America began to change.

3. *Communication between mission presidents.* The distance between the large countries of South America was great. Brazil is larger than the continental United States, and its major cities are hundreds of miles away from bordering countries. The majestic but formidable Andes separate the countries of the east and west. Even Argentina and Uruguay are separated at the mouth of the Río de la Plata by one hundred fifty miles of water. The difficulty in communication between countries was made even more problematic because of a newly developed but often inadequate international telephone system. Mission presidents had almost no contact with each other. But more important, there was almost no relationship between the missions because there was no need for communication. Presidents were instructed that they were on their own and needed to make their own decisions. If there were problems, they were to contact Salt Lake City and not the other mission presidents.

That all changed with Elder Tuttle. Even before he arrived to live permanently in Uruguay, he held a South American mission presidents' conference. In April of 1961 the mission presi-

dents of South America got together in Montevideo, Uruguay. Their discussions were varied and wide ranging. They talked about missionary work, member development, and ways they could work together to meet challenges, primarily dealing with the translation of Church materials. They again gathered in June of that year in Salt Lake City for the worldwide mission conference, then again in November of the same year. During the four years Elder Tuttle was in Uruguay, they met at least semiannually in official mission president conferences in the different mission headquarters throughout South America.

What happened in these meetings was significant. President Tuttle did not have his own specific programs. He had general ideas of what he hoped would occur but seldom presented those ideas with a personal plan on how to reach these goals. He did make sure that the general programs of the Church were followed, such as adoption of *A Uniform System for Teaching Investigators*, mission lessons introduced in 1961. But he strongly believed in the inspiration of each of his individual mission presidents. He indicated what he wanted to have happen but left it up to them to determine how best to accomplish those goals. In the mission presidents' conferences, he allowed for a free flow of ideas. Individual presidents were asked to describe the programs that were working in their missions. Discussion occurred between the presidents, often with little participation from Elder Tuttle. He would recognize that certain programs were having success and suggest that other presidents may want to think about adopting the programs, but he never insisted. He believed his role was to bring the presidents together, encouraging interaction.¹⁰

The primary function of these meetings was spiritual renewal. These were presidents and wives who were struggling to try to successfully fulfill the mandate of their calls. It was a constant battle dealing with missionary and member prob-

10. The only exception was near the end of his mission when he instituted a program to teach only families in which the husband was present.

lems. There were times of loneliness and feelings of abandonment matched with periods of great spiritual experiences and growth. The opportunity to get together with sixteen other men and women who were having the same experiences was rewarding. Their meetings were moving and invigorating. Spiritual experiences were common. The times of relaxation when they could talk informally were important aspects of the meetings. They left these three-day meetings on a spiritual and emotional high. The friendships that developed continued beyond their missions.

Elder Tuttle's additional activities strengthened the unity of the mission presidents. He had an almost constant schedule of travel and visits. He made extensive mission tours twice a year during which he interviewed every missionary. Those tours encouraged close relationships with the mission presidents and their families because of the many hours together on the road. His trips to Salt Lake City almost always included stops in several of the missions for brief visits. He was in Buenos Aires on a regular basis and always made sure he visited with the mission presidents. He would bring together two or three presidents for special events or activities. The exchange of ideas was constant. Elder Tuttle saw himself as a friend of the mission presidents and genuinely enjoyed their company. He also took on responsibility for helping to clear up the more serious and difficult issues. Whenever mission presidents faced problems that were difficult to resolve, he boarded a plane to be with them. The resolution of problems was an important part of the experiences, but the times together when conversation could be intimate and focused were perhaps the most important part of the visits.

These activities were in sharp contrast to a lack of contact with General Authorities occurring before his arrival. Instead of feeling isolated, the missions began to see themselves as a unit. The missions had a unification of purpose and spirit that was probably unique in the world. This constant contact also

served the purpose of encouraging the mission presidents to keep working hard. Any weakening of resolve or slacking of responsibility would be soon recognized. The result was that all missions in South America achieved a significant level of success in both missionary work and local development.

4. *Implementation of Church programs.* Elder Tuttle's leadership had the effect of ensuring that all missions were following Church programs. But perhaps more important, his presence meant that Church programs would actually reach South America. There had been a tendency in the past to institute certain programs in the areas where the Church was well established, but often those same programs were not introduced to the membership as a whole. This is understandable because the numbers of members required to support many programs may have been insufficient. Elder Tuttle, however, was anxious that, as much as possible, the complete program of the Church be made available to the members in Latin America. He pushed hard for the recognition of the growth that was occurring. He worked to increase what was available to the members. His programs included translation of Church manuals and instructions. His activity was important in the introduction of a school system in Chile that was similar to, though much smaller than, the program in Mexico. One of his primary goals was the organization of stakes. He talked about temples for South America.

His greatest effort was in the area of chapel construction. While he lived in South America, an organized program of construction in South America for the building of chapels, mission homes, and offices was established. It was not an easy program to administer and was a significant challenge for him and the mission presidents, but the result was that chapels were built in all the major areas of Church population. More important, when new congregations were organized, the time before building a chapel was shortened.

5. *Decentralization of Church administration.* The centralization of most decisions to Salt Lake City made administrating the missions problematic. The fact that a mission president had to write to the First Presidency for permission to buy a heating unit for their home was an example of the difficulty of management of the Church from afar. Decentralization was a complicated process that took several years to implement. Elder Tuttle's presence in South America showed in a vivid way the value of giving administrative functions to regional units. He showed what could happen if a General Authority was put in the region and given authority to make decisions. He demonstrated what happened to growth and development when local attention was given. He showed how a General Authority's presence in a country could spiritually affect the members. Decentralization was to be completely implemented in its present form by 1984 when Elder Tuttle returned as president of the South American South Area, this time, however, with two General Authority counselors. His experience in Montevideo was a valuable example of an idea that is now common in the Church.¹¹

6. *Emphasis on promises to the Lamanites.* The Church has sometimes shown ambivalence in how to implement their perceived responsibility to the descendants of Lehi. Though most Church leaders recognized that Latin America had a much larger indigenous population, the emphasis of Church programs and missionary work had historically been focused toward the native population found in the United States. This resulted in some frustration for Church leaders because of a lack of success among this population.

During his first trip to South America, Elder Tuttle made a serious study of the Book of Mormon, desiring to understand exactly what promises were given to the Lamanites. He developed ideas about how these promises could to be fulfilled.

11. Kahlile B. Mehr, "Area Supervision: Administration of the Worldwide Church, 1960–2000," *Journal of Mormon History* 27 (Spring 2001): 192–214.

Though the focus of missionary work in South America during his time in Uruguay was primarily to the European immigrants, he worked hard to increase activity among the indigenous peoples of the Andes. Peru was a very special place for Elder Tuttle because of the number of indigenous population. He visited most of the countries with large indigenous populations where the Church had not been established and talked often of the value of the gospel in their lives. Missionaries were sent into Bolivia during his last year in South America. He constantly emphasized that now was the time for the blessings of the Lamanites to be realized. It was one of his greatest frustrations that more was not done at that time with the indigenous population. He felt concern over their serious social and economic problems. He constantly warned of the spread of communism that was attractive throughout the region. His concern about the role of the Catholic Church in subverting the population was also a theme in his thinking.

Elder Tuttle was instrumental in teaching Church leaders in Salt Lake City about the indigenous population living outside the United States. He continually talked about the responsibility of the Church to these peoples. He never suggested that the Church should diminish its programs to the Native Americans of the United States, but he was vocal in pointing out the size and importance of the indigenous population in South America. He almost always made sure that visiting General Authorities got to see the archaeological ruins of Peru, often taking them to Machu Picchu. His closest friend and ally, Elder Boyd K. Packer, who was on the Lamanite Committee of the Church for many years and had a strong connection to the Native American population in the United States, made a trip to South America that included a poignant and moving experience in Peru with the indigenous population. In an important speech to a group of Native Americans at Brigham Young University in February 1979, Elder Packer made the first significant public indication that the emphasis of the Church

toward the Lamanite population was to shift from the United States to Latin America. It was something Elder Tuttle believed and taught during his time in South America.

7. *Image of the Church in South America.* Elder Tuttle was concerned about how the Church appeared to the population at large. To most outside of the Church, the image was more like a small strange sect than a legitimate church. He struggled to change that image. Seeing the inadequate meeting places of the members, he built several homes and offices on what was called the “Mormon Block” in Uruguay. The building of large, beautiful Wasatch Front–like chapels also worked toward changing that image. The way in which the Church was presented to the community as a whole was important to Elder Tuttle. He encouraged media activities that presented the Church in a positive way. Elder Tuttle made sure that General Authorities from Salt Lake visited with the political leaders of the country, often with the president.

He also made a concerted effort to improve the quality of the converts. Elder Tuttle continually emphasized the baptism of complete families. He suggested that the baptism of middle-class men with administrative experience was the goal of the Church. He encouraged missionary work among the population with money and prestige. He was pleased when families who owned cars joined the Church because the possession of an automobile represented a higher social class. He believed that if the socioeconomic level of members could be upgraded, the success of the Church would grow.

8. *Effect of the Tuttle family on the members.* Elder and Sister Tuttle genuinely loved South America. In their official writings and histories, they expressed admiration and love for the region. In their private diaries, that admiration did not change. They talked positively about the people and were genuinely appreciative of the chance to be in Latin America. Elder Tuttle wrote annual letters to the First Presidency expressing hope that

he would be allowed to stay just one more year. The members appreciated the Tuttle's love for them.

Elder Tuttle did not have a good command of Spanish, in part because of his limited chance to study. However, that deficiency had little effect on his relationship with the members. He talked with as many as he could during his visits. He developed personal friendships. He became personally involved in many members' lives and tried to help them as best he could. He was not just a visiting authority who visited and left; he was a friend to many. The members appreciated his concern.

Sister Tuttle and their children also had important influences on the members. Unlike Elder Tuttle, they were able to learn and speak Spanish well. They became involved in all the activities of the Church where they lived, and they presented to the members an example of the type of family that was talked about but not often seen. The branch demographic makeup often included large numbers of youth, single women, and part-member families. Seeing how the Tuttle family lived suggested the impact that living the gospel could have on their own lives. The Tuttle family's example was important to the members, particularly the youth, as they worked to follow that example.

Organization of the Book

Understanding Church development during this period requires a knowledge of the personalities of those involved, particularly that of Elder Tuttle as well as that of the mission presidents and local leaders. This book will focus on stories, personalities, and programs, not on chronological history. It will not be a complete history of the Church in each country because of the redundancy of the experiences in each of the missions. Each country and mission will be examined in relation with the development of specific events, programs, and processes. As such, an appreciation of this period is gained by

looking at the evolution of the Church as influenced by mission presidents and local leaders in each country.

Because Elder Tuttle's service is the key to what happened in South America in the 1960s, chapters 2 and 3 will examine his life to the point of being called as a General Authority. Chapter 3 places the Church in South America in context of the history of international missionary work in the 1960s.

Chapter 4 briefly examines the early history of the Church in South America, showing its growth to the time Elder Tuttle came to Uruguay. It concludes with an evaluation of how he adjusted his role as president of the South American Mission in supervising the missions in six countries. This chapter establishes the framework under which Elder Tuttle functioned in South America.

An important key to the development of the Church during this period was the evolution of the missionary program. Fundamental changes in missionary responsibilities and activities resulted in increased growth and expansion of the Church. William Grant Bangerter of the Brazilian Mission had an innovative understanding of the role of the missionary. Chapter 5 examines the Church in Brazil, focusing on the missionary program established by Bangerter and continued by his replacement, Wayne Beck. This chapter will examine the similarities and differences in the program of the Brazilian Mission and the Brazil South Mission administered by Presidents Asael Sorensen, Finn Paulsen, and Elmo Turner.

J. Thomas Fyans, president of the Uruguayan Mission, was an organizational leader. His approach to administering the Church was to establish programs, complete with a multitude of instructions and completion dates for each step. In Uruguay he emphasized the development of local member organizations with the ultimate goal being the organization of a stake. His programs were copied throughout South America, particularly his "Six Steps to Stakehood." Chapter 6 will focus on the Church in Uruguay with emphasis on the development of local

member programs developed under the direction of President Fyans and his successor, President James E. Barton.

The Church had been in Argentina since 1925, experiencing slow and methodical growth. Congregations had been established throughout the country, and second-generation members were found throughout the country in 1959, when Laird Snelgrove became mission president. Consequently, Argentina was in dire need of chapels to house the many congregations. The evolution of the construction program of the Church that built chapels and mission homes in South America using donated labor will be the focus of chapter 7. It will show the positive results of this program in Argentina both in the lives of the young men who became construction missionaries and the local congregations. It will also show the struggles and challenges in administering a program that was not part of the ecclesiastical structure of the Church.

Chapter 8 looks at Peru and the important role the indigenous populations of the Andes played in the Church during this period. Chapter 9 focuses on the North Argentine Mission, which was organized after the Tuttle's arrived. It will examine the public relations activities of this time, highlighting the program of this mission established by President Ron Stone in the North Argentine Mission. This chapter will also examine a related activity, the public relations programs established throughout the region. Chapter 10 examines the evolution of schools in Chile and how they fit into the development of the Church in Chile. It will present Elder Tuttle's plan for an educational system throughout South America.

The final chapter will examine results of this five-year period. It will evaluate what happened and how these events led to an explosion of the Church in South America.

Focusing on a specific period or person can be misleading. Events do not occur in a vacuum, and significant events are preceded by a process of slow, evolutionary change. Seeing events alone without a background knowledge of changes that

occurred is insufficient. I have tried to place this time period within a context of the history of the Church before Elder Tuttle arrived in South America and events that occurred after he returned to Salt Lake City. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the four years Elder Tuttle lived in Uruguay were unusual and significant and should be recognized as such. By living in the region and focusing full time on South America, his experience became an important step in the administrative evolution of the Church. The changes that were instituted were important events that affected the Church for years to come. It is hoped that the reader will recognize the significance of this period to both the local history of the Church and the future of the Church worldwide.