

# “Unto Every Nation”

## Scenes of Church Growth Worldwide

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**L**atter-day Saints since the beginnings of the Restoration have taken seriously the Savior’s injunction to go “into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15; see also Matthew 28:19). In the latter days, the Lord has given the same directive: “Send forth the elders of my church unto the nations which are afar off; unto the islands of the sea; send forth unto foreign lands; call upon all nations, first upon the Gentiles, and then upon the Jews.” He also stipulated that “this gospel shall be preached unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (D&C 133:8, 37). Thus the Church’s global expansion fulfills the will of God.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, Church members view the process of globalization as the fulfillment of prophecy, both ancient and modern. Daniel’s prophecy from the Old Testament anticipated that in the last days “the God of heaven” would “set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed” but will roll forth and fill “the whole

earth” (see Daniel 2:26–44). In the modern era, the Lord likewise affirmed, “The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2). In 1842 the Prophet Joseph Smith insisted that God’s work would not be completed until “the truth of God . . . has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear.”<sup>2</sup>

For The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, globalization is not just an interesting topic; it is an urgent priority. The mission of the Church is to bring all people everywhere to Jesus Christ so that they might enjoy the eternal fruits of His gospel. A worldwide church is certainly in a better position to accomplish this mission than a local or regional church.

From its small beginning in western New York in 1830, the Church has grown into a worldwide movement. This chapter will first consider factors that have affected the Church's ability to accomplish its global mission. These include internal factors (such as fundamental features of the restored Church), means of gaining a foothold in new areas, and external forces (including a nation's political climate). From this platform, the chapter will then present a series of vignettes from Church history that demonstrate how the Lord's work is moving forward through small and simple means from its beginning in North America to its more recent worldwide expansion.

### INTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING CHURCH GROWTH

*Inspired leaders with divine keys.* The Lord has called prophets, seers, and revelators to give direction to His earthly kingdom. Specifically, the Twelve Apostles are to be "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world." Under the direction of the First Presidency, they are charged to "build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations." Furthermore, they are given "the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, . . . first unto the Gentiles and then unto the Jews" (D&C 107:23, 33, 35).

On July 23, 1837, the Lord affirmed that the Quorum of the Twelve had the responsibility to "unlock the door of the kingdom in all places." "Whithersoever they shall send you," the Lord continued, "go ye, and I will be with you; and in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you" (D&C 112:17, 19). Interestingly, it was on that very day that the Apostles were given their first opportunity to preach in Great Britain, thus opening the promised door for proclaiming the restored gospel.

The Twelve are to be assisted by the Seventy, to whom are given essentially the same responsi-

bilities (see D&C 107:23, 25, 33, 34). Hence the formation of Quorums of the Seventy during the last quarter of the twentieth century represented a significant step in fulfilling God's plan for Church growth.

*Proselyting efforts.* Latter-day Saints, as individuals or groups, have an interest in sharing the gospel message that has blessed their lives. They take seriously the Lord's declaration that "it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor" (D&C 88:81). One who benefited from a member's missionary efforts was Anna Widtsoe, who lived in Trondheim, Norway, during the later nineteenth century. She "had serious doubts" about the teachings of her church, and "earnestly she prayed and read and studied to understand the purposes of the Lord with mankind, especially with herself." She was astonished when one day her shoemaker declared to her, "You may be surprised to hear me say that I can give you something of more value than soles for your child's shoes." Somehow, his bearing impressed her. Later, when he returned some repaired shoes, Anna found Mormon tracts "carefully tucked into each toe." Following two years of struggle and searching, Anna was baptized.<sup>3</sup> Decades later, her son John would become a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Along with Great Britain, Scandinavia was a major source of strength to the Church for many decades.

*Language ability.* Certain character traits and abilities have contributed to the Saints' success in sharing the gospel. The Lord has promised that "every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue" (D&C 90:11). Inability to speak the local language frustrated the efforts of Parley P. Pratt in Chile, Hosea Stout in China, and Heber J. Grant in Japan. On other occasions, many missionaries testified that they had been blessed with the gift of tongues as they shared the gospel in foreign nations. For example, before his baptism, Karl G. Maeser, a German convert and future president of Brigham Young Univer-

sity, was able to converse with Elder Franklin D. Richards, president of the European Mission, only with the help of a translator. After the ordinance, they were able to communicate freely without translation, though Maeser was speaking German and Elder Richards, English.<sup>4</sup>

The first missionaries to Scandinavia were converts from that same area. Because they knew the people, customs, and language of those whom they taught, they enjoyed great success. A knowledge of the language and local culture was also a definite advantage to the missionaries who first carried the gospel to Mexico. Anglo youth who grew up in the Mormon colonies of northern Mexico became immersed in the language and culture of the area. Even though they were of a different ethnic background, they became effective instruments in God’s hands in establishing the gospel throughout Latin America. In like manner, members of the Japanese community in Hawaii who spoke Japanese played a key role in introducing the gospel in post–World War II Japan. The work in Portugal was opened largely by missionaries from Brazil who spoke the same language and shared similar cultures. Certainly the work will accelerate as indigenous missionaries carry the gospel to their own countrymen.

**Cultural sensitivity.** The ability to accept and appreciate other cultures is essential in spreading the gospel. Missionaries must go beyond merely tolerating different cultures; they must develop a genuine love for the people, their customs, and their language. Young George Q. Cannon was an effective missionary in the Pacific because he demonstrated respect and love for the Hawaiian people as he ate their food and slept in their humble island homes. A similar example of Elder John Groberg’s mission to Tonga has become legendary.<sup>5</sup> In 1961 the Church established the forerunner of missionary training centers—not only to teach missionaries foreign languages but also to help them understand and appreciate the culture of the people whom they are called to serve.

**The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.** Some fundamental questions frequently pondered include, Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? Is there life after death? The restored gospel of Jesus Christ provides answers. Many hear the message of the Latter-day Saint missionaries and recognize it as that for which they have been yearning.

The Book of Mormon has played a particularly important role in the conversion process. The title page announces that the purpose of the book is to convince “the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST.” Latter-day revelation affirmed that this book sets forth “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” and that it proves “to the world that the holy scriptures [the Bible] are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old” (D&C 20:9, 11). For example, when Elder John Taylor first presented the gospel to the Cannon family in Liverpool, he gave them a copy of the Book of Mormon with the promise that if they would read it, they would know his message was true. For the next several days, the father read the book during every available moment. When he was finished, he declared: “A bad man could not have written it and a good man would be afraid to. It is from God.”<sup>6</sup> His thirteen-year-old son, George Q. Cannon, would later become a member of the First Presidency.

## MEANS OF GAINING A FOOHOLD

Even though missionaries might have the foregoing skills, they still need something more. Mountain climbers are able to ascend even the steepest slopes if they can gain a secure foothold from which to proceed. The same has been true in the worldwide spreading of the gospel. The following are various means by which the Church has obtained a foothold in various lands.

**Family connections and the influence of friends.** Sharing the gospel with relatives has

been important in the growth of the Church. Converts are typically eager to share their newfound faith with family members and friends. Many converts in the early days of the Church, for example, journeyed to surrounding areas (especially to New England and Canada), where they taught relatives and friends and established new Church branches. Similarly, as we will see, the first doors were opened overseas when a Protestant minister from England allowed his brother from Canada to preach.

Friends have played a similar role in spreading the gospel. Rodney Stark, a sociologist who has analyzed how religions grow, noted that many studies affirmed that “interpersonal ties are the primary factor in conversion.” Or in other words, “conversion was coming to accept the opinions of one’s friends [or relatives].”<sup>7</sup>

***Bringing the gospel home.*** Converts in various lands have been instrumental in carrying their adopted faith back to their homelands. Micha Markow, a Hungarian living in Istanbul, Turkey, heard the gospel there and was baptized in 1887. The following year he returned to his hometown and shared his newfound faith with members of his family. Over the next decade, more than one hundred Hungarians were baptized.

Decades later, during the second half of the twentieth century, the gospel message spread into Yugoslavia through the efforts of Kresimir Cosic, a star basketball player recruited by Brigham Young University. While at BYU Cosic joined the Church, and upon returning home he played on the Yugoslav national team, giving him the opportunity to publicize his new religion. In addition to assisting missionaries from America, he succeeded in translating the Book of Mormon into Serbo-Croatian.<sup>8</sup>

At about this same time, missionaries in Switzerland began working with the Italian minority living there, most of whom had relatives across the border in Italy. Concurrently, many Italians who had moved to West Germany in

search of work received the gospel and carried it back to their homes in northern Italy. These contacts, in addition to the activity of Latter-day Saint servicemen farther south, formed the basis of reopening missionary work in Italy in 1965 after it had been closed for more than a century.

A door was opened in India when Edwin Dharmaraju and his wife, Elsie, both of whom had joined the Church in Samoa, returned home to Hyderabad and shared their faith. Twenty-two family members were baptized, and a branch was started. Sister Dharmaraju’s father, a Baptist minister, became interested and translated the Book of Mormon into Telegu, a language spoken by more than fifty million people. His help was especially valuable in south Asia, where local laws and immigration policies generally excluded missionaries representing new churches.<sup>9</sup> These efforts led to the establishment of a mission in India.

***Refugees finding the gospel.*** Economic pressures and political crises in recent decades have forced many people to leave their homelands and to form ethnic enclaves abroad. The Church has taken steps to reach such groups. In south Florida in 1980, for example, one-third of all baptisms were Cuban refugees.

The largest wave of refugees in recent years came as hundreds of thousands fled southeast Asia during the 1970s. About one-half million of these “boat people” came to the United States. Church members have reached out to them, helping them find happiness and meaning in life through the gospel. When a number of Laotians in Elgin, Illinois, joined the Church, a returned missionary who had served in Thailand commuted thirty miles from Chicago to serve as a translator for them. In Oakland, California, English classes taught by missionaries led to the baptism of 350 Asians. A Cambodian family in Long Beach, California, and their friends accepted a missionary’s invitation to attend church. Though these people could not speak English, the members’ friendliness encouraged them to continue

attending and to invite more friends. After six weeks the number of Asian investigators passed the one hundred mark.

President Spencer W. Kimball believed that teaching refugees was a preliminary step in taking the gospel to all the world, since refugee converts might one day carry it to countries where the Church is now unable to go.<sup>10</sup> As the twenty-first century dawned, some of these refugees or their children were returning as missionaries to their homeland in southeast Asia.

***Emigrants carrying the gospel.*** The foregoing section discussed how individuals traveled abroad, found the gospel, and then brought its good news back to their homelands. In other instances, faithful Latter-day Saints carried the gospel with them as they migrated to new homes in lands where it had not yet been introduced. This, for example, was the means of planting gospel seeds in South America.

***Latter-day Saints abroad.*** Latter-day Saints living or traveling abroad sometimes provide the Church's first contact in a new area. The first converts in Spain came in the 1960s when personnel at American military bases there shared the gospel. Men and women in military service have played this role throughout the world, particularly in Asia.

Latter-day Saints working abroad for businesses or in government service have functioned similarly, especially in Latin America and Africa. At first, most of these families came from the United States, but in recent years they have been joined by member families from other countries, particularly western Europe.

***Cultural and professional contacts.*** The Mormon Tabernacle Choir has traveled abroad more frequently during recent decades. Favorable publicity surrounding their performances has helped to open doors in many lands. Performing groups from Brigham Young University have also created a good impression for the Church abroad. The Young Ambassadors were received enthusiastically during a visit to China

in 1979, the year that the United States established diplomatic relations with that country. BYU has also recruited individuals to teach English as a second language at various Chinese universities. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (also a world-renowned heart surgeon) acted as a visiting professor at a Chinese medical college, teaching doctors the latest techniques of coronary surgery. Even though none of these individuals or groups could preach the gospel, their friendship and example garnered respect for the Church.<sup>11</sup>

***Tracts and pamphlets.*** Anna Widtsoe's experience of receiving the gospel in Norway illustrates the powerful impact even a small piece of literature may have. When Hugh B. Brown arrived in Cambridge as a new missionary in 1904, he distributed tracts as an attempt to create opportunities for gospel conversations. One of these fell into the hands of a group of seventeen families who had left the Church of England and were seeking a new pastor. As a result, Elder Brown was invited to preach to this group, and within three months every member of the group was baptized.<sup>12</sup>

There have been other times when there were no members or missionaries to introduce the gospel into a particular area. In some cases, Church literature such as magazines, tracts, or pamphlets has been the means the Lord has used. In 1954 Paul Thiruthuvadoss of Coimbatore, India, found a Latter-day Saint tract in a used book; he was impressed with its message, contacted Church headquarters, and began sharing the gospel. Eventually a thriving branch was established.<sup>13</sup>

***Electronic media.*** Announcements and programs on radio and television have also been means of sharing the gospel message. Weekly broadcasts of Music and the Spoken Word featuring the Tabernacle Choir have made friends for the Church worldwide. In the year 2004, the choir completed seventy-five years of broadcasts, making it the longest continuously running

program in network radio. On television, the Church's "Homefront" announcements have communicated the gospel's emphasis on the family. During the closing years of the twentieth century, the Church established its Internet site and has continuously added features, making it easier for the public to learn more about the Church. The site also provides help to Latter-day Saints in living the gospel and carrying out Church programs, enabling them to access resources in areas such as genealogy and family home evening.

### EXTERNAL FACTORS SUPPORTING CHURCH GROWTH

Though the Saints' commitment to share the gospel with the world remains firm, results have varied. At any given time, progress in one country might be substantial, while nearby it might be blocked completely. Likewise, in a given area, long periods of negligible progress can be interspersed with great success. Reasons for these fluctuations are many, including several external forces that have had a substantial impact.

*A culture of Christian faith.* Over the years, Latter-day Saint missionaries have enjoyed the greatest success in areas where Christianity was already established. The people whom they taught had already accepted the Bible, so the missionaries had a common ground on which to build. Furthermore, those who already had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ were more likely to be spiritually prepared to recognize the added gospel light made available through the latter-day Restoration.

Religious history had a unique impact in Europe. The restored Church was first established in areas such as Great Britain, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Holland, which had supported the Protestant Reformation. In these countries, people had been encouraged to study the Bible for themselves. There was already a tradition of willingness to change religions. Furthermore, most of these areas had religious free-

dom. By contrast, the missionaries initially were less successful in France and southern Europe, which had remained Catholic. In the New World, on the other hand, the Church continues to grow rapidly throughout Catholic Latin America due to a variety of factors, including the unique appeal of the Book of Mormon to the descendants of Father Lehi.

In non-Christian areas, Latter-day Saint missionaries often sought out and enjoyed initial success among the Christian minority. The growing number of Christian converts provided a broader base from which to reach out to the non-Christian majority. Early success in Korea, for example, came among the ten percent of the population who were already Protestant. Significantly, in Asia the Church is growing fastest in the Philippines, where over four centuries of preaching primarily by the Catholics has made 90 percent of the people at least nominally Christian.

Still, established Christian churches often became the Latter-day Saints' most bitter opponents. Clergymen in Britain as well as on the European continent were often the first to attack missionaries and their converts. This problem was particularly acute in areas that had not traditionally been Christian. In the Pacific, for example, Protestant missionary organizations rightfully claimed credit for converting native populations to Christianity and therefore resented the Latter-day Saint missionaries for "stealing sheep" from their flocks.

The spiritual climate of dissatisfaction with existing churches especially has aided the introduction of the gospel. This was the situation in Toronto, Canada; in Herefordshire, England; and, more recently, in West Africa. In these places, the missionaries found a field which truly was "white already to harvest" (D&C 4:4).

*Government policies.* In New Testament times, the Roman Empire facilitated the spread of Christianity through its well-developed system of travel, trade, and communication. On the other hand, persecutions instituted and pro-

moted by certain emperors posed major obstacles to the progress of the Lord’s work. Likewise, in the present dispensation, governmental policies and actions have both helped and hindered the spreading of the gospel.

The Lord has affirmed that He established the Constitution of the United States through “wise men [He] raised up unto this very purpose” (D&C 101:80). Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and the protection of basic inalienable freedoms enabled America to become the land where the gospel and Church could be restored and the base from which they could spread throughout the world.

Laws enacted to protect religious freedom in Denmark, Switzerland, and Holland immediately preceded the opening of missions in those countries and certainly contributed to success there during the mid-nineteenth century. The Germanic areas, however, lacked such guarantees, so missionaries were sometimes jailed or even expelled. Obviously under such conditions progress was slower.

Laws restricting proselyting have hampered missionary work in several areas; therefore, securing legal recognition has become a high priority whenever the Church enters a new area. Depending on a country’s regulations, this status can enable the Church to conduct religious services, perform marriages, distribute literature, own property, and in other ways support the spiritual progress of the Saints.

Nationalism has sometimes impeded spreading the gospel. Some nations oppose ideas or practices they regard as foreign to their own culture.

Feelings about America have both benefited and hurt the Church. In areas where the United States is well regarded, missionaries from America have been well received. On the other hand, anti-American feelings have hampered the Church, even in certain areas of Latin America. During the early twentieth century, the Japanese were offended by United States restrictions on

the number of Asian immigrants; this was the setting for the mission’s closure in 1924.

Elder Orson Pratt looked forward to the time when “despotic powers” would be overthrown and replaced by governments more amiable to establishing the Church.<sup>14</sup> Eastern Europe provides a good example. As Soviet communism spread across Europe following World War II, missionaries were expelled from Czechoslovakia and eastern Germany, and religious activities of the Saints in those countries were severely restricted. It seemed impossible that missionaries would ever be permitted to work in that region again. Doors were opened when, beginning in 1989, communist regimes toppled and were replaced by democratically elected governments. Missions were established in such areas as Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, the Baltic states, and even the former Soviet Union.

*The impact of wars and revolutions.* The disruption of life caused by revolutions or rebellions has sometimes brought missionary work to a halt. Such conditions in Chile and China definitely contributed to the failure of Elders Pratt and Stout in those countries. In Mexico, on the other hand, a revolution secured the religious freedom that enabled Latter-day Saint missionaries to teach there. Still, a later revolution caused the evacuation of colonists and missionaries from Mexico.

Major wars have likewise had a mixed impact. World Wars I and II clearly disrupted the Church’s work, not only in areas where there was actual fighting but worldwide, as young men were diverted from missionary to military service. Hundreds of Saints were killed during these conflicts, thousands lost their homes, and chapels and other Church buildings were destroyed. Still, World War II took Latter-day Saints into new areas where they later returned, established their homes, and helped to introduce or build up the Church. Latter-day Saint servicemen were particularly instrumental in introducing the gospel into Japan and Korea. They also introduced the

gospel into the Philippines and later into south-east Asia.

**Economic conditions.** Economic factors have also had a mixed influence on the Church's progress around the world. Financial distress during the Great Depression reduced the number of missionaries by approximately one-half and delayed construction of many badly needed chapels. Times of prosperity, on the other hand, have not necessarily resulted in greater progress for the Church: during economic prosperity many people see no need for God or religion.

The gospel is often received first by humble people in lower socioeconomic classes. In England, for example, success in the industrial areas surrounding Preston and Manchester contrasted sharply with the cooler reception the missionaries received in the more sophisticated climate of London. Yet extreme poverty has also been a limiting factor. People who are preoccupied with where their next meal will come from sometimes think they have no time for religion. In some developing areas, Church programs needed to be simplified or even cut back to accommodate poverty-stricken wards and branches. Illiteracy is also a challenge in many poor areas. To overcome this, the Church has developed effective literacy programs. The ability to read opens doors not only to better gospel understanding but also to greater financial stability.

Immigrants are also more receptive to the gospel. After leaving their homes, where they had deep roots, they need to establish new patterns of life, and this often involves making decisions about religion. During and immediately following World War II, large numbers moved to the West Coast to work in defense industries or to return to areas that they had first encountered during military service. Some of the highest rates of Latter-day Saint growth occurred in these regions, particularly in California, during the 1950s.

The foregoing internal and external factors have affected Church growth at different times and in various ways.

## VIGNETTES OF EARLY CHURCH GROWTH

Daniel's prophecy indicated that the Church would not only become very large but specifically that it would fill the whole earth. The varying rate of Church growth around the world reflects that growth has not come simultaneously to all areas of the world, but "there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The Lord has declared that He knows "the end from the beginning" (Abraham 2:8) and that "all things are present before [His] eyes" (D&C 38:2). Hence there is a divine timetable when certain developments need to occur to accomplish His purposes.<sup>15</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized on April 6, 1830, in western New York. Within a year, however, the Church's center shifted a few hundred miles west to Ohio.

**Kirtland.** The first Latter-day Saint missionaries reached northeastern Ohio in late 1830, just a few months after the Church had been organized. One of the elders, Parley P. Pratt, was eager to share the restored gospel with his old friend, Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon, a pastor, and his congregation had been impressed by the teachings of Alexander Campbell on the need for a restoration of New Testament Christianity. They therefore were interested when the missionaries told them about the experiences of the Prophet Joseph Smith and that the true Church had been organized once again on the earth. Rigdon wasn't convinced, however, until he prayerfully read the Book of Mormon. Within a few months of the missionaries' arrival, several hundred members of his congregation were baptized, providing a population base for the new Church headquarters.<sup>16</sup> During the next few years, branches were established in nearby areas of the eastern United States and Canada.



**Upper Canada.** This area, just north of Lake Ontario, was the first scene of missionary work outside of the United States. Mormonism "arrived in the province just as the Canadian society was bracing for the social and political turmoil of the 1830's," observed historian Richard E. Bennet. "There were many elements within society and many doctrines and practices within Mormonism that when combined, contributed to the success of the Latter-day Saint proselyting efforts in the province especially between 1832 and 1838."<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, the first testimony of the Book of Mormon borne outside of the United States was actually given by a Reformed Methodist preacher, Phineas Young. He had received a copy of the book from Samuel Smith in April 1830, and in August of that year at Kingston, Ontario, Canada, he testified of its divine origin to a group of over one hundred people.<sup>18</sup> In April 1832 Phineas was baptized in New York, along with his brothers Joseph and Brigham. In June, Phineas, Joseph, and four other missionaries returned to Kingston, where they preached for six weeks, despite a cholera epidemic, and established the first branch in Canada. In December, Brigham and Joseph came back to the area, gained more converts, and established additional branches. Brigham Young would later become one of the original Twelve Apostles and the second President of the Church, while his brother Joseph became one of the original Presidents of the Seventy.

The efforts of these missionaries were followed up three years later by John E. Page, "far and away the most successful Mormon missionary in British North America."<sup>19</sup> During a period of eighteen months in 1835 and 1836, he baptized over six hundred people. The eight-year-old son of one of his converts was Ira Nathaniel Hinckley, Gordon B. Hinckley's grandfather.<sup>20</sup>

In 1836 Parley P. Pratt, one of the original Twelve Apostles, left Kirtland for Canada. In Toronto he met John Taylor, an immigrant from England who was a member of a group con-

vinced that no existing churches corresponded to New Testament Christianity. This group had been meeting for two years, seeking the truth. At first Elder Pratt was received only coolly. Discouraged, he planned to leave Toronto after being there only one day, but a friend of the Taylors felt impressed to invite Elder Pratt to stay and offered her home as a place where he could preach to the group. As they listened to Elder Pratt, many were convinced that he represented what they had been seeking. Converts included John Taylor and his wife, Leonora Cannon, together with Joseph Fielding and his sisters Mary and Mercy. John Taylor, along with Mary Fielding's son Joseph F. Smith and grandson Joseph Fielding Smith, would all become Presidents of the Church. The gospel was carried overseas for the first time when a few of the early Canadian members became an important part of the mission to England.

**Great Britain.** In 1837 Joseph Smith appointed a group of seven missionaries, headed by Apostles Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde and including four of the converts from Canada, to open Great Britain, the Church's first overseas mission.

Religious conditions in Britain proved fruitful for the missionaries. Many people had become disillusioned with existing churches that seemed not to be teaching the gospel of Christ as recorded in the Bible. Furthermore, the working classes felt abandoned by the "absentee clergy" of the dominant churches. Groups were actively seeking for something better.

As the missionaries arrived at Liverpool, they were undoubtedly filled with anxiety as they wondered how best to gain a foothold in this new land. Family relationships would play a key role. Immediately they were impressed to travel a short distance inland to the city of Preston, where Elder Joseph Fielding's brother, James, was a Protestant minister. Reverend James Fielding was eager to meet the missionaries, having heard of the Restoration in letters

written by his brother and sisters in Canada. He therefore invited the elders to attend his Sunday services.<sup>21</sup>

During Reverend Fielding's sermon, the missionary elders were secretly "praying to the Lord to open the way for [them] to preach."<sup>22</sup> At the conclusion of the service, they were surprised yet overjoyed to hear Fielding announce that the missionaries from America would speak during the afternoon service. Elders Kimball and Hyde both preached that afternoon. (It was on this very day that across the sea in America Joseph Smith was told by revelation that the Apostles would have power to open doors for the gospel.) As a result of this opportunity, the first converts in Great Britain were baptized just one week later.

Three years later, a family connection led to another remarkable harvest of souls. William Benbow, a convert in the "Potteries" section of England, introduced the missionaries to his brother John in Herefordshire, further south. John Benbow was one of six hundred people in the area who were seeking religious truth. He was the first of these "United Brethren" to be baptized. Eventually, Elder Wilford Woodruff and his associates would baptize all but one of this group. By the time the Apostles returned home in 1841, there were over five thousand Latter-day Saints in Great Britain.<sup>23</sup> Tens of thousands would join the Church in Britain during ensuing decades. Approximately fifty thousand of these new converts, many of whom were skilled artisans, emigrated to Utah in the nineteenth century, helping to strengthen the base of future Church growth.<sup>24</sup>

### **EARLY GROWTH IN OTHER AREAS**

The first missionary work of the Church in a language other than English was conducted in the South Pacific. In 1844 four missionaries arrived at Tubuai, an island in what is now French Polynesia. Soon the missionaries enjoyed success on Tahiti and other nearby islands.

After the 1844 martyrdom of Joseph Smith, the famed westward trek of the Mormon pioneers shifted the center of Latter-day Saint membership from the American Midwest to the Rocky Mountains. Only a temporary lull in Church growth followed this significant change.

In the 1850s the Church expanded into continental Europe. In 1850 the first Latter-day Saint missionaries to Scandinavia arrived in Denmark. Soon missionaries took their message to Sweden, Norway, and Iceland. About this same time, missionaries reached France and Germany, and the work soon spread to Italy and Switzerland. In the period between 1850 and 1905, some thirty thousand converts from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden moved to Utah,<sup>25</sup> thousands emigrated from Germany, and a few hundred emigrated from Switzerland and other European countries.

During the later part of the nineteenth century, the Latter-day Saints also found converts in other parts of Europe, notably in Austria and the Netherlands. Outside of Europe, missions were established in such diverse areas as South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga, and Turkey. One of the most significant new areas was Mexico.

*Beginnings in Latin America.* Although in 1851 Elder Parley P. Pratt had attempted to preach the gospel in Chile, the Church's real beginning in Latin America came a quarter of a century later in Mexico. In contrast to Elder Pratt's inability to speak Spanish, the later missionaries would be able to speak Spanish and would be armed with the Book of Mormon in that language.

In 1875 President Brigham Young called Daniel Webster Jones to prepare for a mission to Mexico and to begin translating the Book of Mormon. Jones had lived in Mexico earlier, where he not only had learned the language but also became thoroughly acquainted with the customs of the people. However, Jones soon concluded that his knowledge of Spanish was not adequate for the important assignment of translating the

scriptures. He therefore was grateful for the unexpected arrival of Meliton G. Trejo, a former army officer from Spain, who declared that his greatest desire was to help translate the Book of Mormon into Spanish. With his help, the project of translating the Book of Mormon moved toward completion.<sup>26</sup> Brigham Young also instructed the missionaries to look for suitable sites for potential Latter-day Saint settlements south of the U.S.-Mexican border.

The missionaries entered Mexico early in 1876. This was a particularly favorable time. For centuries the Catholic Church had dominated Mexican political and economic affairs, but under the leadership of Benito Juárez, the Mexican constitution of 1857 and related laws provided for the separation of church and state and for equal protection of all beliefs. Unfortunately, however, these reforms resulted in two decades of revolution and confusion. Then in 1876, the very year the missionaries arrived, Porfirio Díaz seized power. His thirty-five-year rule retained most of the reform laws but restored economic stability and progress. He continued the policy of encouraging foreign investment and even colonization in Mexico.

Elder Jones and his companions crossed the border from El Paso, Texas, to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, on January 7, 1876. They immediately encountered opposition from the Catholic clergy but nevertheless were able to make some friends.

In the city of Chihuahua, the missionaries were cordially received by the state governor, who gave them valuable advice concerning possible future colonization in the area.

During their three weeks in Chihuahua, the missionaries preached but did not baptize any converts. More significantly, they published a pamphlet with selected passages from the Book of Mormon translated into Spanish. They mailed five hundred copies of *Trozos Selectos* to the leaders of more than one hundred communities throughout the Republic of Mexico. One of these pamphlets fell into the hands of an intellectual

leader in Mexico City who shared its message with a circle of friends. Some were convinced of its truth and requested more information from the Church.

In response, missionaries were sent to the Mexican capital in 1879. The importance of this mission was clear as it was headed personally by Elder Moses Thatcher of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. During the next ten years, missionaries in the Mexico City area baptized 241 converts, organized several branches, and published additional literature, including a complete Spanish translation of the Book of Mormon. From these beginnings the work would spread throughout Mexico and beyond.

### RECENT WORLDWIDE EXPANSION

During the twentieth century, the international growth of the Church continued. This process, however, was interrupted by two world wars, which led to a curtailment of missionary activities and also restricted international travel. Still, World War II brought Church members in contact with people and places that were either untouched by the gospel or had only had brief exposure to it. In the years since World War II, the Church has grown rapidly and expanded into new territory.

*Postwar Japan and Korea.* While conditions in Japan during the first quarter of the twentieth century had not been favorable for preaching the gospel, World War II created conditions allowing the return of missionaries—this time to enjoy substantial success. Latter-day Saint servicemen among the American occupation forces made an important contribution to the future of the Church in Japan. Many were anxious to bless the Japanese people with the spirit and message of the gospel. When three Latter-day Saint soldiers were offered a cup of tea in a curio shop in the village of Narumi, they declined and took the opportunity to explain the Church's teachings concerning the sanctity of the body. This led to further gospel conversations,

and on July 7, 1946, the shop's proprietor, Tatsui Sato, and his family became the first postwar converts baptized in Japan. The young serviceman who baptized Mrs. Sato was Boyd K. Packer, a future member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.<sup>27</sup>

Latter-day Saint servicemen, particularly chaplains, also played a vital role in opening missionary work in Korea. As soon as the Korean War ended in 1953, formal missionary work began, which built on the good foundation already laid by the military personnel. By 1960, approximately one decade after postwar growth started in the region, there were about 3,200 members in Japan and 800 in Korea.

During the second half of the twentieth century, many other countries opened for missionary work. During this period the Church experienced its greatest growth in Central and South America. In recent decades, Latin America has become the fastest growing area for the Church.

***Expansion in Latin America.*** The Church's beginnings in South America came during the years between the two World Wars. Following World War I, many German immigrants sought a better life in Argentina. One of these immigrants, Wilhelm Friedrichs, preached the gospel and shared the Book of Mormon with other Germans in Buenos Aires. This small ethnic group provided the nucleus from which the Church soon spread into the Spanish-speaking majority. In 1925 the First Presidency sent Elder Melvin J. Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to Argentina to officially open the South American mission. While in Buenos Aires, he prophesied that from this humble beginning the work would grow slowly at first but that eventually thousands would join the Church.

A similar process took place in southern Brazil. When members of Roberto Lippelt's family accepted the gospel in Germany, he was resentful and eventually decided to immigrate to Brazil "to rid himself of contact with the Mormons and start a new life with his family in another

land."<sup>28</sup> However, missionaries were sent to their small farming community after Roberto's wife wrote to Church headquarters requesting literature to use in teaching her children. The missionaries were warmly received. Eventually Roberto and many of his German friends joined the Church, leading to the first Brazilian branch.

Faithful Latter-day Saints from North America played a key role in opening the gospel to other areas of Latin America. In 1941 John O'Donnal was sent to Guatemala to work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture on an experimental rubber plantation. He took advantage of every opportunity to share the gospel and found the people to be quite receptive. The first elders were assigned there six years later. At a private swimming pool surrounded by tropical greenery, the first four converts, including O'Donnal's wife, Carmen, were baptized. From this beginning, the work spread. Decades later when the first Central American temple was dedicated in Guatemala, John O'Donnal became its first president, with Carmen serving as matron.

The same pattern was seen in other areas. A governmental assignment took the Frederick S. Williams family to Uruguay in 1943. They became the nucleus of Montevideo's first Latter-day Saint branch, which consisted mostly of similarly employed North Americans. Branch members made a favorable impression on local officials and facilitated the opening of a mission there after World War II. Uruguay had one of the more progressive and stable governments in Latin America, so the Church flourished.<sup>29</sup>

The decision to send missionaries to the western coast of South America was made during Elder Henry D. Moyle's 1956 visit. In both Chile and Peru, a faithful Latter-day Saint family from the United States provided a nucleus for Church activity.

At the Santiago home of William Fotheringham, a Kodak employee, Elder Moyle organized the first Chilean branch with Brother Fotheringham as its president. Three days later, Elder

Moyle also organized the Lima Branch at a gathering in the home of Frederick S. Williams who was working in Peru at the time. This was the same family around which missionary work had developed in Uruguay a decade earlier. Elder Moyle pronounced an apostolic blessing on the land and people of Peru as he had done earlier in Chile. These families from North America not only provided valuable leadership experience but also served as excellent role models of Latter-day Saint living for the new converts. The missionaries found the people in these new areas to be very receptive, and in this favorable climate the Church grew rapidly.

Sociologist Stark has looked at some of the factors influencing Latter-day Saint growth in Latin America. In contrast to the notion that religion is less vital in countries where material progress has been greater, he concluded that "Mormon membership is far greater in the more, rather than less, modernized nations of Latin America. . . . If modernization lies ahead for all of Latin America, then so much the better for the future of Mormon growth."<sup>30</sup>

By the end of the year 2002, there were over 950,000 members in Mexico, over 500,000 in Central America, and nearly 2,750,000 in South America. The total of approximately 4,200,000 members in Latin American represented over 35 percent of Latter-day Saints worldwide.<sup>31</sup>

*West Africa.* The work had been established in South Africa during the nineteenth century and spread to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) during the 1950s. The gospel was then introduced to the predominantly black sections of West Africa in some rather unusual ways. Relying only on printed material received from Salt Lake City, some 16,000 unbaptized Latter-day Saints were meeting in Nigeria before proselytizing officially began in 1978.<sup>32</sup> In Neugu, one of the crowded cities of Nigeria, Paul Ihuoma was prompted to pick up a scrap of paper from a cluttered gutter—written on it was the name of the Church and the city of its headquarters. He was

moved to write for information and, along with several others, would play a significant role in teaching the people in his area about the Restoration.<sup>33</sup>

Emmanuel Abu Kissi helped introduce the Church into the African nation of Ghana. A medical doctor, he first came into contact with the Church while living in England. Soon he returned to Ghana where he established a small medical clinic, shared the gospel, and provided leadership as the Church began to grow in his homeland.<sup>34</sup> From such beginnings, the work in Africa expanded rapidly, particularly following the 1978 revelation extending priesthood blessings to all worthy males (Official Declaration 2). By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Church had a presence in most of the countries of Africa. There were over 188,000 members, of whom only about 47,000 were in the countries of South Africa and Zimbabwe, where the Church was established before the 1970s.<sup>35</sup>

Despite all these advances, there were still areas of the earth—including many parts of Asia and Africa—where the gospel had not yet been preached. At the dawning of the twenty-first century, Latter-day Saints looked forward to seeing some of these gaps filled so that Daniel's prophecy of the Church covering the whole world might be more completely realized.

## LENGTHENING OUR STRIDE

We have seen that a variety of factors, internal and external, have affected the Church's progress worldwide. Factors such as the Saints' eagerness and readiness to share the gospel are clearly within our control. Others, such as government policies, wars, and socioeconomic conditions, may seem to be beyond our influence. In these cases, however, we can and should pray for our Heavenly Father to pour out His Spirit to bring about changes that would favor the advancement of His work on earth. Still, President Spencer W. Kimball has declared: "I can see no good reason why the Lord would open doors

that we are not prepared to enter. Why should he break down the Iron Curtain or the Bamboo Curtain or any other curtain if we are still unprepared to enter?" Thus the ball truly is in our court. "Are we prepared to lengthen our stride? To enlarge our vision?" President Kimball asked.<sup>36</sup> We must pray, labor, and live in such a way that "the kingdom of God [may] go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come" (D&C 65:6).

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## NOTES

1. For a more complete discussion of the material in this chapter, see Donald Q. Cannon and Richard O. Cowan, eds., *Unto Every Nation: Gospel Light Reaches Every Land* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003).
2. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:540.
3. Alan K. Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 21–22.
4. See Cannon and Cowan, *Unto Every Nation*, 63.
5. See John H. Groberg, *The Other Side of Heaven* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001).
6. Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 34.
7. Rodney Stark, "Extracting Social Scientific Models from Mormon History," *Journal of Mormon History* 25 (Spring 1999): 179.
8. See Bruce A. Van Orden, D. Brent Smith, and Everett Smith Jr., eds., *Pioneers in Every Land* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 22–38.
9. See Elizabeth S. VanDenBerghe, "Edwin Dhar-maraju: Taking the Gospel Home to India," *Ensign*, April 1990, 60–62.
10. See *Church News*, June 14, 1980, 16.
11. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Getting to Know China," in *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1991), 93–101.
12. See Church Educational System, *Church History in the Fulness of Times* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000), 472–73.
13. See Cannon and Cowan, *Unto Every Nation*, 385.
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15. James R. Moss, "Patterns of International Growth" in *The International Church*, ed. James R. Moss, R. Lanier Britsch, James R. Christianson, and Richard O. Cowan (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Publications, 1982), 305.
16. See Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983).
17. Richard E. Bennett, "A Study of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Upper Canada, 1830–1850" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975), 26.
18. See Carma T. Prete, "An Early Fruitful Field, 1830–1845," in *Legacy of Faith: Kingston and Area, 1830–2002*, ed. Roy A. Prete (Kingston, Ontario: Kingston Branch, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002), 7.
19. Richard E. Bennett, "'Plucking not Planting,' Mormonism in Eastern Canada, 1830–1850," in *The Mormon Presence in Canada*, ed. Brigham Y. Card (Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta, 1990), 23.
20. See Prete, "An Early Fruitful Field, 1830–1845," 22–23.
21. See V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter, eds., *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 73.
22. Bloxham, Moss, and Porter, *Truth Will Prevail*, 74.
23. Bloxham, Moss, and Porter, *Truth Will Prevail*, 199.
24. See Richard E. Bennett, "Pioneers," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 923.
25. See William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), vii.

26. See K. E. Duke, "Meliton Gonzales Trejo: Translator of the Book of Mormon into Spanish," *Improvement Era*, October 1956, 714–15.
27. See Harrison T. Price, "A Cup of Tea," *Improvement Era*, March 1962, 161; see also Spencer J. Palmer, *The Church Encounters Asia* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 65–69; Boyd K. Packer, in *Conference Report*, April 1975, 155.
28. Cannon and Cowan, *Unto Every Nation*, 266.
29. See "The Church in Uruguay and Paraguay," *Ensign*, February 1975, 30; Frederick S. Williams, *From Acorn to Oak Tree: A Personal History of the Establishment and First Quarter Development of the South American Missions* (Fullerton, CA: Et Cetera, 1987).
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31. Cannon and Cowan, *Unto Every Nation*, 300–301.
32. E. Dale LeBaron, "African Converts without Baptism: A Unique and Inspiring Chapter of Church History," BYU Devotional Address, November 3, 1998.
33. Rendell N. Mabey, *An African Legacy* (Salt Lake City: Rendall N. Mabey, 1998), 143; see also 131–44.
34. See Van Orden, Smith, and Smith, *Pioneers*, 210–20.
35. See Cannon and Cowan, *Unto Every Nation*, 417.
36. Spencer W. Kimball, "When the World Will Be Converted," *Ensign*, October 1974, 7.