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# THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN SOUTH AMERICA 1945-1960

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Church History and Doctrine

Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Joel Alva Flake

August 1975

This thesis, by Joel A. Flake, is accepted in its present form by the Department of Church History and Doctrine of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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# PREFACE

A perusal of the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shows that between 1945 and 1960 the Church made tremendous progress in South America. Church membership there grew more than 1000 percent, from just over 1,200 members in two missions to more than 14,000 members in five missions. The local members developed in leadership and faithfulness to the point that almost half of all South American branches were presided over by native leaders. Even the opposition to the work of the Church could perhaps be taken as a manifestation that progress was being made.

This thesis is a record of both the history of this period and of the reasons behind the progress that was made. In writing this thesis, manuscript histories of the missions have been searched; personal interviews conducted; yearly mission reports have been studied; and Church periodicals, both English and Spanish, have been reviewed. Missionary journals, diaries, letters, and other related materials collected by the missions over the years and kept at the Church Historian's Office, have been examined. Background material on South America

came from several good source books in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University.

## Chapter 1

## THE SEEDBED

Describing the setting in which this history took place will help in understanding some of the factors that influenced the growth of the Church in South America in the years 1945 to 1960.

South America is a land of contrasts. The differences are especially pronounced in physical make up, national governing systems, and standards of living. Certain portions of the Atacama Desert in northern Chile have not had rainfall for at least 400 years, while the southern regions of South America often get more than 200 inches of rainfall annually. Though it is not unusual for Lima, Peru to go twenty years without rain, just across the Andes in the Amazon basin is the largest and wettest tropical rain forest in the world.[1] In the desert regions of west central South America hardly a living thing can be found, and in Argentina's pampa region the black earth is 7 to 11 feet deep and so rich that fertilizer is seldom necessary to encourage an abundant crop.

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[1] A. Theodore Tuttle, "South America . . . Land of Prophecy and Promise," The Improvement Era, LXVI (May, 1963, 352.

The governments in South America are very unique one from another. In the 1945-1960 period ranged from Uruguay, a free democractic republic, to her neighbor Paraguay, a blatant military dictatorship.

The vast disparity between rich and poor was very apparent both between and within the South American nations in the 1950's. In many South American cities horse and ox-drawn carts traveled the streets among the sleek new automobiles, and adobe huts crouches just a few blocks from modern skyscrappers. Monstrous hillside slums overlooked wealthy mansions in Rio de Janeiro. The rugged beauty of the Andes was a sharp contrast to the squalor and abject poverty in which the Indians of that region lived.

However, since they all basically had the same historical, religious, and cultural roots, there were certain similarities between these nations. Their political, economic, and social problems were much the same.

## PHYSICAL FEATURES

South America's two most distinguishing geographical features are the lofty Andes mountains and the mighty Amazon River. The Andes are the longest chain of mountains in the world, stretching 4,500 miles in

South America.[2] Mount Aconcaugua, rising 22,835 feet, is the highest point in the western hemisphere. Twenty-one of the Andean peaks are higher than North America's highest point, Mount McKinley, in Alaska. For almost 3,000 miles no pass can be found through these mountains at less than 12,000 feet.

The great Amazon River drains an area three-fourths the size of the United States and is the largest river system in the world. It has 1,110 tributaries, some of which are 3,000 miles long. The river begins one hundred miles from the Pacific in Peru and it carries twelve times as much water into the ocean as the Mississippi.[3] Its fresh water flows one hundred miles into the Atlantic. Not a single dam nor bridge crosses it in its nearly 4,000 mile course. Huge European ocean vessels travel more than 2,300 miles up the river to Iquitos, Peru.[4] It is estimated that one-fifth of the world's fresh water comes from the Amazon.

The continent of South America covers one-eighth of the earth's surface. It is twice the size of the United States and Alaska. Its southern tip lies just

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[2]J. Fred Rippy, Latin America (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 9.

[3]John Gunther, Inside South America (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 85.

[4]Rippy, p. 13.

five hundred miles from Antarctica and Rio de Janeiro is 1,500 miles farther from Los Angeles than from Gibralter. In fact, Brazil extends 2,600 miles east of New York City. The world's largest waterfall, beautiful Iguasu Falls, is located on the Argentine, Paraguayan, and Brazilian borders in south central South America.[5]

## THE PEOPLE

The racial mixture in South America is divergent. Uruguay and Argentina are almost all white (that is, of European descent), while Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia are 50 percent Indian. There are about forty million full or part blooded Indians in South America.[6] Brazil, with 11 percent Negro, 62 percent European, and 25 percent mixed population, really has such intermixture that the majority of the people consider themselves mulattoes.[7] Recife, Brazil is much more like an African city than like Boston or New York. On the west coast, Chile's people are nearly 90 percent mestizo, that is, of European and Indian descent.

The divergence between educated and ignorant,

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[5]Mary Wilhelmine Williams, The People and Politics of Latin America (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1945), p. 9.

[6]Tuttle, p. 353.

[7]Gunther, p. 11.

civilized and savage, in the 1950's was stark. Of the 500,000 surviving pure Indians in Brazil, about 50,000 in the deep interior had had no exposure whatsoever to civilization. In Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, the inert, oppressed, and impoverished Indians formed a huge, unassimilated mass who had almost nothing to do with national life.[8] On the other hand Uruguay and Argentina were made up largely of middle class people where the aristocratic land owning class was rapidly diminishing.

Portuguese is the most widely spoken language in South America, followed by Spanish, then the Indian tongues. One half of the population of Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador do not understand Spanish, and Paraguay is officially bi-lingual, the people speaking Spanish and Guarani.

The South Americans had one of the highest birth rates in the world in the 1950's. The population was about 170 million of which half were under eighteen.[9] Huge cities sprang up over night in many areas as the rural population began to move to the cities. Belo Horizonte, Brazil, did not exist at the turn of the century and in sixty years had become bigger than Denver. In

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[8]Helen Miller Bailey and Abraham P. Nasatir, Latin America: The Development of Its Civilization (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1960), p. 435.

[9]Gunther, p. 108.

twenty-five years (1935-1969) Lima, Peru grew from 470,000 to 1,700,000, almost 400 percent. Just one slum area in Lima had over 200,000 residents.[10]

## HISTORY

Columbus landed in Venezuela in 1498 and claimed it for Spain.[11] Two years later, Pedro Cabral, a Portuguese sailor, discovered Brazil and set his flag thereupon. During the three hundred years thereafter South America lived under the domination of these two great powers. Within a twenty year period, though, in the early 1800's, all of South America was liberated. Her great liberators were Bolivar, San Martin, Sucre, O'Higgins, and Miranda. Bolivar liberated six countries and San Martin three.

South America did not fall into the solid, unified, democratic pattern that her neighbors much farther north did. The countries that colonized South America had had little experience with democracy and had not experienced the Protestant reformation. Spain and Portugal were absolutist monarchies at the time and the religion they brought exerted influence toward absolutism, not democracy.[12] These first invaders of South America were

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[10]Gunther, p. 123.

[11]Williams, p. 108.

[12]R. A. Gomez, Government and Politics in Latin America (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 17.

not colonists, but plunderers and killed millions of native Indians while extracting much of their wealth. Pizarro, with 183 men conquered all of Peru and double crossed and defeated the trusting, naive Indians, many of whom thought their great white god had returned.

## ECONOMICS

South American nations were in a poor condition economically during the 1950's, but they liked to call themselves developing rather than underdeveloped nations. The average income was only $269 a year with 2 percent of the people making 70 percent of the wealth.[13] Ten percent of South Americans owned 90 percent of the arable land and some of the fuedal estates paid their workers as low as one cent a day.[14] Thus three fourths of South Americans lived in severe poverty. Some attempts were made to break up the land, but the land owners in most countries were too powerful and more often than not controlled the government.

Another problem was that many South American countries were one-product nations. They had not diversified and thus their economy was completely dependent on one crop or product, as in the case of

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[13]Gunther, p. XIV.

[14]Gunther, p. 90.

Chile, which was dependent on copper, Colombia, which depended on coffee, bananas from Ecuador, tin in Bolivia, and oil in Venezuela.

## POLITICS

South America was important to the United States in many areas, particularly in politics, strategy, investments, and trade. One third of all U.S. imports were from South America. Though South America sided with the United States in World War II, she seemed to resent the "big brother" role of the U.S. with its Monroe Doctrine and occasional Latin American interventions.[15]

Many of her own problems were political. Revolutions were common, though often not full scale bloody encounters, and usually meant little more than temporary shifts in political power.[16] Some were simply forced substitutions of personnel. Sometimes the participants themselves did not take the revolutions seriously, as in one case in Brazil. The Brazilian president, Vargas, committed suicide in 1954 and threats of public disorder resulted. Army tanks were dispatched to the

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[15]Donald E. Worcester and Wendell G. Schaeffer, The Growth and Culture of Latin America (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. VII.

[16]German Arciniegas, The State of Latin America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), pp. 355-357.

presidential palace to control the situation though they were slow in arriving, due to huge civilian rush hour traffic. The tanks reached their destination eventually and, in front of the palace, found that rival tanks had already arrived. The enemy crews then proceeded to play football together, using the tanks to mark their goals.[17]

South America's biggest problems were revolution, land reform, inflation, population pressure, politics, corruption in government, industrialization, hemisphere relations, American policy, communist position, oligarchy, the church, the army, and getting her people to pay their taxes. She needed education, development, and political stability, but it was difficult to set a priority.

> You cannot extend education without the financing that will come from development; but development is similarly impossible without an educated cadre. And neither education nor development is possible without some measure of political stability.[18]

Most of these countries had stormy political histories. Venezuela had one hundred revolts in 150 years, Bolivia had 179 changes of government in 126 years, and Chile had eight presidents in eighteen months. Argentina had over two hundred different political parties.

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[17]Gunther, p. 13.

[18]Gunther, p. 523.

## HEALTH AND EDUCATION

The health and education of the people was also a big problem. Twenty percent of all Brazilian children died in their first year, and a Peruvian woman had to bear eight to ten children to have three survive to adolescence.[19] Many of the Indians were stunted in their growth and their life expectancy was very low.

Although the oldest university in the new world is in South America, at Lima (San Marcos University, founded in 1551), education in general is deplorable.[20] Only 2 percent of the gross national product of South America was spent on education and illiteracy was at 50 percent. Only 15 percent of young people high school age went to school and 15,000,000 grade school children did not attend because there were no schools for them. Recife, a city in Brazil the size of Baltimore, had only two public secondary schools.

## TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Traveling by air was the best transportation in South America, then roads, and last railroads. To go from Bahia, Brazil to Aracaju, Brazil, for example, was twenty-eight hours by train, seven by car, and thirty-five

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[19]Gunther, p. 342.

[20]Worcester, pp. 950-951.

minutes by jet. Brazil was second in volume of air traffic in the world and its air service was swift, frequent and comprehensive.[21] Every South American country had an airline of its own.

Travel by car was poor. In Paraguay there were only one hundred miles of paved road.[22] This was a nation the size of California, which has 120,000 miles of paved road. The whole country of Bolivia, a nation of three million, had only 14,000 automobiles. Paraguay had 10,000. Giant Brazil had only 6,400 miles of paved road, less than the environs of a big city in this country.[23] Her unpaved roads were in very poor condition with "mud-holes 300 miles wide." Manaus, a Brazilian city of 160,000 did not have one road leading to it and could be visited only by river or air. A whole state in Peru containing more than 150,000 inhabitants, had no roads.

Railroad travel was in poor shape except in Argentina, where 40 percent of all South America's railroads were located. Brazil had only 23,000 miles of railroad, the United States had ten times that much.[24] California had nearly fifty times as much railroad as comparably sized Paraguay, which had only 309 miles of rail. Its locomotive on the one thousand mile run from Asuncion to Buenos Aires was wood burning and only ran

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[21]Gunther, p. XI.

[22]Tuttle, Era, p. 556.

[23]Gunther, p. 6.

[24]Worcester, p. 869.

once a week.

Communications were quite poor in South America and mail service was slow and often infrequent. Phone service was not much better. Argentina had more than half of the phones in South America. Brazilian phone service was such that routing a call via New York was sometimes the fastest way to call across town.[25] Newspapers relied on dispatches from the U.S. even for news of their own South American neighbors.

## RELIGION

More than one third of all the Roman Catholics in the world lived in South America, though fewer than 20 percent were active and went to mass regularly.[26] Over 90 percent of all South Americans claimed to be Catholic, and Brazil was the largest Catholic country in the world and San Paulo the largest Catholic archdiocese. There were about 4,500,000 Protestants on the continent.

The Church and state were closely tied in Argentina, Paraguay, and Peru, at that time, and not very closely tied in Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. The historic South American Catholicism was "undiluted and all-embracing." The early conquistadors fought in the name

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[25]Gunther, p. 12. [26]Gunther, p. 130.

of the cross and baptized Indians by the tens of thousands. No church but the Catholic was permitted on the continent at that time and the church grew "rich and decadent."[27] It became the biggest land owner on the continent and holds that distinction today.

THE NATIONS

Now a word about the individual countries concerned in this thesis will be given. First is Argentina. This, the second largest country in area in South America and eighth largest in the world, was probably the best developed and strongest country in South America in the 1950's.[28] Ninety percent of the people were of European descent and it had been said that Argentina gave the impression of not being a South American nation at all, but "a slice of Europe that happens to be situated in South America by geographical accident."[29] Half of all Argentines had Italian blood, and only 1 percent were pure Indian. For years Argentina was the largest British colony outside the British commonwealth. The British ran an efficient railway system in Argentina until Peron nationalized it.[30]

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[27] Austin F. Macdonald, Latin American Politics and Government (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1954), p. 19.

[28] Macdonald, p. 23. [29] Gunther, p. 169.

[30] Macdonald, p. 26.

Argentina had the highest standard of living in South America and with Uruguay, the best educated and healthiest citizens. Literacy was at 91 percent and life expectancy and infant mortality were the highest and lowest respectively in South America.

Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, was the biggest port in the western hemisphere except for New York, and had nearly 6,000,000 inhabitants in the metropolitan area. It was the ninth most populous city in the world and one of the most beautiful.

Argentina gained her independence from Spain in 1816 and in 1853 adopted a constitution much like the United States'. She was however the most anti-American South American country during the 1950's and had the largest communist party.[31] The state church was backed and financially supported by the government and both the president and vice president had to be Catholic according to the constitution. There were 400,000 Jews in Argentina.

Brazil, the fifth largest country geographically in the world and the largest in South America, made up half the continent and half the people in South America. It borders on every South American country but Ecuador and Chile. It has a temperate climate that seldom falls below fifty degrees and rarely reaches one hundred.

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[31]Gunther, p. 168.

Between the years 1500 and 1800, three and a half million Negroes were imported from Africa to work the sugar plantations of Brazil.[32] Their intermarriage with the Portuguese created a large mulatto population in Brazil, but there have been almost no racial problems there. The largest colony of Japanese outside the orient lived in Brazil, and at one time Germans were of such numbers in Brazil that German was a second language of the country. The speaking of German was outlawed however, during World War II and after.

Brazil had more potentially arable land than all of Europe although half of the farmland was possessed by 1.6 percent of the owners.[33] She ranked first in natural resources and industry in South America and produced more coffee and iron ore than any other country in the world. Her Varig Airlines were the fifth largest airline world wide, but though progressive, she still had some of the poorest, most destitute people in all South America in her northeast.

Tiny Uruguay, the smallest South American country (Brazil is forty-five times as large) was inhabited largely by people of European descent and had a strong middle class. There were few slums, no pronounced extremes between rich and poor and no large underdeveloped

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[32]"The Church in Brazil," Ensign, V (February, 1975), 26.

[33]Gunther, p. XV.

or uninhabited areas. She was the most stable Latin American republic and was ruled by a nine man commission.[34] The Army had little power. She had, with Argentina, the highest literacy rate and the best public health record on the continent, but one common problem she did have was that 1 percent of the population owned 33 percent of the land.

Uruguay was very anti-clerical, so much so that Christmas was known as Family Day and Easter known as Tourist Week. Several leading families were atheist and Uruguay did not have a Catholic cardinal for many years.[35]

Paraguay was about 90 percent mestizo and was ruled by a dictator. The capital city of Asuncion was founded in 1537 and although there were no slums in Asuncion, the average income in Paraguay was only $201 a year. This was probably the least developed country in South America. Only 1.3 percent of her land was arable.[36] Some of her boundaries were still in dispute in the 1950's including the one with Bolivia.

Chile is 2,650 miles long, but averages only 110 miles in width. It is a land where avalanches, floods, volcanic eruptions, landslides, and damaging storms are frequent. In 1960 an earthquake in Chile left

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[34]Gomez, p. 73. [35]Gunther, p. 221.

[36]Gunther, p. 239.

350,000 homeless in winter and killed 5,000 others.

Santiago, the capital city, was the fourth largest city in South America, and had 2.5 million people. Punta Arenas, population 55,000, was the southernmost city in the world and was a stopping place for many ships going through the Straits of Magellan. Chile had 8.4 million people, two thirds of whom lived in or near cities. The nation was both maritime and mountainous, and its one main product was copper, and this was 85 percent in the hands of American companies.[37] Seventy-five percent of the arable land was owned by 5 percent of the people and 10 percent of the people got 50 percent of the national income.[38]

Peru is the third largest country in South America and is 50 percent Indian. Lima, its capital, was the dominant Spanish city in South America for three hundred years and was the seat of the Spanish vice royalty.[39] The Indians had little to do with the national life in Peru, which was mostly run by whites and mestizoes. The highest railroad in the world was in Lima and climbed from sea level 16,000 feet into the high Andes.

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[37]Harry Bernstein, Modern and Contemporary Latin America (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott, 1952), p. 566.

[38]Gunther, p. 274.

[39]Tom B. Jones and Donald Beatty, An Introduction to Hispanic American History (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 112.

This is the setting for the history of the Church which will cover the fifteen years between 1945 and 1960. This is the seedbed in which the seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as promulgated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was sown.

## Chapter 2

## THE SEED IS PLANTED

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a missionary Church. In fact, just a month after its organization in 1830 the first LDS missionary, Samuel H. Smith, left his home in New York to preach the gospel. Since that time tens of thousands of Mormon missionaries have traveled to all parts of the world to spread the news of the restored Church. The word of the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants was, "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. (133:8.)

The Mormons heeded this divine commission and attempted to carry it out. In 1837 the first foreign mission of the Church was established by Heber C. Kimball in Great Britian. By 1854 the Church had sent missionaries into fourteen different countries in widely separated areas of the globe. The Pacific Isles were opened in 1844, France in 1849, Asia and Australia in 1851, and South Africa in 1853.[1]

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[1]Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials in Church History (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973), p. 634.

The gospel, which was to go to all nations (Mark 16:15), was not preached in South America until 1925, although an earlier attempt had been made. In 1851 Elder Parley P. Pratt, an early day Mormon apostle, and his wife, and a companion, Rufus Allen, were sent on a mission to South America by Brigham Young "to open the door and proclaim the gospel in . . . South America," and dedicate the land for missionary work.

They arrived at the port city of Valparaiso, Chile, in November, 1851 and commenced to study the language, mingle with the people, and work to sustain themselves. After a few months of rather discouraging progress with the language, and an insufficiency of funds, and owing to a revolution then in progress in the country, the missionaries returned home.[2] In spite of the apparent failure of their mission, Elder Pratt declared prophetically that there was a brighter day in the future for the work of the Lord in South America which would ultimately result in "the restoration of unnumbered millions of the house of Israel and of Joseph--even of many nations."[3]

During the seventy-five years between Elder

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[2]Parley P. Pratt, Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1950), pp. 397-401.

[3]Brigham H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 4:70.

Pratt's mission and the 1925 opening of the South American Mission, no further attempt was made to preach the gospel, but a marvelous change took place that was necessary to prepare the hearts of the people and their governments for the gospel message. The growth of liberalism, of toleration, and of a strong anti-clerical movement, and the coming of thousands of immigrants from Western Europe, changed the religious make-up of that part of the world.[4]

In 1922 Brother Wilhelm Friedrichs, an Argentine member of the Church, wrote the following to Reinhold Stoof of Salt Lake City. Stoof was the editor of a German LDS publication; Brother Friedrichs had emmigrated to Argentina from Germany in 1923 with Emil Hoppe, another German convert.

> I should like to say that I am glad to be here. I will do my best in preaching the gospel. I came into this country to prepare the way for others. I will give you in brief a report of my work. From April 6 till August 3 we had 18 meetings and sunday schools, we had altogether 26 friends in attendance. Besides we held bible classes in the home of Brother Hoppe, 10 classes from May 29 till July 31, we had 17 friends there.[5]

They held Bible classes in the homes of their investigators also, who were growing strong in the faith.

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[4]John D. Peterson, "History of the Mormon Missionary Movement in South America to 1940" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1961), p. 27.

[5]Wilhelm Friedrichs to K. B. Reinhold Stoof, August 9, 1924, located in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

> They believe that our message is the gospel of Jesus Christ; they always like to hear about the Book of Mormon. Mrs. Biebersdorf, one of those friends, has read the Book of Mormon, and yesterday she bore testimony that this book is the word of God. In a short time they can be baptized; but it may take a long time before elders will arrive here to baptize them. Our Lisbeth will be eight years on August 26, and she should be baptized too. So we will have 4 or 5 ready for baptism. . . . In Buenos Aires there are 10,000 Germans . . . please translate this letter and give it to the authorities of our Church, that they may help us.[6]

Since Friedrichs and Hoppe were not priests, they did not have the authority to baptize--hence their anxiety that missionaries be sent.

After the letter was given to President Anthony W. Ivins of the First Presidency of the Church, he wrote the following to Brother Friedrichs:

> We feel very much interested in your report regarding conditions in Argentina and have had under consideration for a considerable time past the opening of that field for missionary work. Just how soon this may be accomplished is uncertain, but we anticipate that it will be in the very near future. . . . You will not be forgotten in that far away land.[7]

Andrew Jenson, Assistant Church Historian, and Thomas S. Page, a former missionary to Turkey and Armenia, had toured South America in the interest of Church history in 1923, and had reported "that South

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[6]Friedrichs.

[7]A. W. Ivins to Wilhelm Friedrichs, November 1, 1924, located in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

America was ready for the gospel harvest."[8]

On September 3, 1925, the First Presidency announced that they had had under consideration for a year and a half the possibility of opening a South American mission and had concluded that the opportune time was at hand. The South American Mission was to be opened by Elder Melvin J. Ballard, of the Council of the Twelve; Rey L. Pratt, grandson of Parley P. Pratt and a member of the First Council of the Seventy; and Rulon S. Wells, also of the First Council of the Seventy. They were called to "go to South America and dedicate that land for the preaching of the gospel, to open a mission there, and to lay the foundation for establishing the church in that vast continent."[9] Announcement of their call was made to the general membership of the Church during the October 1925 General Conference. Elder Pratt spoke Spanish and Elder Wells spoke German.

After taking care of business affairs and making wills, the missionaries began their journey. They carried letters of introduction from the mayor of Salt Lake City, the president of the University of Utah, the governor of Utah, and United States senators and

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[8]Andrew Jenson, Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), IV:810.

[9]Jenson, IV:810.

ambassadors.[10] These letters commended the missionaries to the confidence and esteem of all with whom they should come in contact.

On November 3, 1925, the three elders took leave of their friends and relatives and traveled by rail to New York City where they boarded the steamship Voltaire on November 14. On board they studied language, history, and scripture and conducted Sunday religious services at the request of the ship's captain. After a twenty-one day, seven thousand mile voyage, the three arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on December 6, 1925.[11]

Upon their arrival they were greeted by Brothers Friedrichs and Hoppe and other friends. They began immediately the work they were called to. During the first night they held a cottage meeting. Twelve adults and four children attended, all Germans. The meeting was held in the home of Ernst Biebersdorf, an investigator. The small group of investigators who were present were found to be "well informed and earnestly desirous of joining the Church." Four days later another meeting was held in which several of the investigators asked for

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[10]Bryant S. Hinckley, Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin J. Ballard (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1949), p. 90.

[11]Melvin J. Ballard, Conference Report, October, 1926, pp. 35-36.

baptism.[12]

During the ensuing week, the elders met with government officials such as the American Consul who received them cordially, although he was full of New England prejudices against the Mormons. They also met with the mayor of Buenos Aires. They had to wait several hours to get an interview with him, but he did receive them graciously. Elder Ballard commented, "[He] assured us that we had the fullest liberty to establish our mission, and that there would be no hindrance on the part of the government." Elder Pratt's good Spanish impressed the mayor.[13]

Arrangements were made for the baptism of six of the investigators. These had previously known the gospel in Germany. On Saturday, the 12th of December, Elder Ballard wrote:

> Just as the sun was going down, I baptized six people in the Rio de la Plata, near the German electric plant here, the first in this generation in South America. Their names follow in their order: Anna Kullick, Ernest Biebersdorf, Jacob Kullick, Marie Biebersdorf, Herta Kullick, and Elizabeth, a daughter of Sister Friedrichs.[14]

The first Sacrament meeting was held the next day at the home of Brother Jacob Kullick. The meeting was

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[12]Melvin J. Ballard, "Elder Ballard Asks Missionaries for South America," Liahona, the Elders' Journal, XXIII (October, 1925), 312.

[13]Peterson, p. 47.

[14]Hinckley, p. 94.

conducted in German by Elder Wells, who also acted as interpreter. Brother Friedrichs and Hoppe were ordained priests, and Brother Kullick and Biebersdorf were ordained deacons. Children were blessed and the new converts were confirmed. "All bore testimony with the same wonderful spirit the saints enjoy elsewhere."

The little branch in Buenos Aires at that time consisted of twelve members baptized and six children blessed.

During the next week, the elders sought a secluded place to offer the dedicatory prayer and finally settled on a beautiful city park. Under the date of December 25, 1925, Elder Ballard recorded the dedication ceremony in his journal.

> The sun came up at 4:41. We were up at 5:00 a.m. Left home at 6:00 a.m. Arrived at Park 3 de Febrero, at the place we had selected near the river, in a grove of weeping willows at 7:00 a.m. We sang "The Morning Breaks," "Hail to the Brightness," "An Angel from on High," "Praise to the Man." Brother Pratt read several passages from the Book of Mormon on promises of redemption of the Lamanites. Brother Wells read from Genesis 49:22-26. We all knelt under a weeping willow tree, and I offered the following prayer.[15]

Elder Ballard then recorded his dedicatory prayer. In it he mentioned the gratitude the elders felt for their safe arrival, for their privilege of opening the work in South America, and for the converts they had already

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[15]Hinckley, p. 94.

made. He prayed for the fulfillment of the promises in the Book of Mormon to the Indians. The leading officials of the Latin American nations were prayed for "that they may kindly receive us." Elder Ballard concluded in these words:

> And now, O Father, by authority of the blessing and appointment of thy servant, the President of the Church, and by the authority of the Holy Apostleship which I hold, I turn the key, unlock and open the door for the preaching of the gospel in all these South American nations, and rebuke, and command to be stayed, every power that would oppose the preaching of the gospel in these lands. And we do bless and dedicate these nations, and this land for the preaching of the gospel. And we do all this that salvation may come to all men, and that thy name may be honored and glorified in this part of the land of Zion.
>
> Help us to bring men to thee and to thy Son, and speed the day when he shall come to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. And for all thy blessings which shall bring success to our labors, we shall ascribe honor, and power, and glory to thee, forever and ever. Amen.[16]

After the prayer, the elders sang and each of them spoke. They enjoyed "a glorious spirit," and blessed one another. The missionaries felt that "as a result of opening this mission, many Europeans in the land would receive the gospel; but that, ultimately, the great import of the mission would be to the Indians." Elder Ballard further commented, "This was a momentous day. All were visibly affected. Their joy was expressed in tears."[17]

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[16]Melvin J. Ballard, "Dedicating South America," The Improvement Era, XXIX (April, 1926), pp. 575-577.

[17]Ballard, pp. 575-577.

Elder Ballard reported in General Conference in October 1926:

> I was impressed . . . on that Christmas morning in 1925 in South America when Brother Wells, Brother Pratt, and I knelt in that beautiful grove of weeping willow trees on the banks of the Rio de la Platta and dedicated the land for the spreading of the gospel, and the spirit of the Almighty was upon us. We were made to know that the gospel message would find thousands who had the blood of Israel in their veins in South America. Then we saw the day when it would go to the fifteen million of Father Lehi's children who are in that land, and that the shackles, politically, would be broken, the day of retribution would come, the day of deliverance, and that they would come into a full realization of the promises of the Almighty. For, for that purpose, we read in the third section of the book of Doctrine and Covenants, was the Book of Mormon given, to bring them, the Lamanites, to a knowledge of the truth.[18]

Almost before their work began, sorrow struck the struggling group. On the day of their arrival, Elder Wells had an attack of dizziness and was unable to work. He soon became very ill. It was a "day full of sorrow--so far from home--needing our united strength to make an opening--and to be crippled and rendered helpless." The doctor diagnosed Brother Wells sickness as blood leakage and recommended that he should not do any more work. Finally, the following cablegram was sent to President Heber J. Grant:

> Wells had several brain hemmorrhages. Doctor and we recommended, on account of condition, should go home, American Legion, January 14,

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[18]Melvin J. Ballard, Conference Report, April, 1930, p. 56.

> condition is not serious. Better now, can travel safely, care of ships Doctor. Cable advise.

So on advice from the First Presidency, Elder Wells returned home. He had been in South America a little over a month and had aided greatly in the work, especially among the Germans.[19] He was greatly missed by the brethren.

> Brother Wells' return was a great sorrow to us. because of his companionship and his knowledge of the German language, but his illness was such, and it continued to recur, that we felt his life was in danger. He was an exceedingly sick man, and yet Brother Wells would have been glad to have stayed there and laid down his life. It was a great dissapointment to us to have him go home, but it was necessary, and he was willing to respond to the suggestion and as cheerfully go as to stay.[20]

His absence created a handicap, for now the translation process was long. Elder Ballard told Elder Pratt in English what he wished to say and Elder Pratt conveyed the message in Spanish to a German girl who spoke Spanish. She would then interpret it for the German listeners. Response came back in the same manner. Because of this language problem, missionary work centered mainly with the Spanish people, in fact Spanish speaking contacts outnumbered those who spoke German by four to one. The seventh convert to the Church was a Spanish sister, a Sister Sifuentes, baptized by Elder Ballard.

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[19]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 34.

[20]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 34.

During the early months, Elder Pratt did most of the speaking at the meetings, and translated when Elder Ballard spoke.[21]

There seemed to be little prejudice against the missionaries at the beginning of the mission. Apostle Ballard said that "the great majority of the people did not even know there was a United States of North America or anything about it, much less did they know anything about the Mormon Church."[22] However,

> the general apathy, if not the utter indifference of the people toward religion and their disinclination to investigate the truth, or to allow anything to interfere with their pursuit of sensual pleasure . . . made it hard to get started or to make any perceptible headway.[23]

A problem that had to be overcome was the lack of interest among the people because the elders were not Catholic. "The whole country is Catholic, as you know," reported Apostle Ballard. They found a way to get to the people, however.

> We shall not abandon our effort to reach the people. We learned anew that "a little child shall lead them." We continued with children, teaching them to sing, teaching them to pray, to repeat the Lord's prayer, the Articles of Faith, and the Ten Commandments. They carried these prayers and songs into their homes, and then one parent appeared, and another, and another, and

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[21]Peterson, p. 49

[22]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 35.

[23]Hinckley, p. 100.

> we finally organized a group meeting of adults, and continued to teach the children.[24]

Thus the children brought their parents and helped open many doors to the missionaries. Sunday Schools and Primaries proved to be one of the most effective ways of proselyting.[25]

In January, 1926, the new mission looked to the future with bright hopes. Requests that missionaries be sent to the new field of South America were made by Elder Ballard and Elder Pratt in a letter to the First Presidency. They wrote,

> A considerable number are investigating the gospel . . . the time [is] right for beginning missionary work . . . you may send us missionaries. We think there will be a good opening for two German speaking and two Spanish speaking missionaries.[26]

The elders looked for converts in several ways. On January 22, 1926, Elder Ballard wrote from Buenos Aires to the President of the European Mission telling joyfully of the continued interest manifest by the people in the gospel and inviting the Saints in Europe to help out. The Millennial Star reported:

> Elder Ballard draws attention to the fact that in Argentina and doubtless in other parts of the great continent, there are some who already heard the Gospel in their native lands, England or Germany especially; and at his suggestion the following notice is given prominence here:

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[24]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 35.

[25]Peterson, p. 51 [26]Ballard, Liahona, 312.

> HAVE YOU FRIENDS IN SOUTH AMERICA? Members of the Church and others whose relatives or friends have emigrated to South America are advised to notify Mission headquarters of their exact addresses, and in turn inform the immigrants of the Mission address, which is as follows: President Melvin J. Ballard, Santa Fe 1301 Argentina Sur America.[27]

Even at this early time the elders used moving pictures and colored slides they had brought from the United States to help create interest in their message. Three reels of film on the antiquities of the Book of Mormon, slides of ancient American ruins, slides of Church history and of Salt Lake City all proved valuable. In February, 1926, the elders started using these aids in conjunction with their meetings.[28] By this time they reported a list of about sixty investigators, some German, some Spanish.

The elders also used handbills to announce their services and publicize their message. In February, 1926, they ordered two thousand announcement tracts in Spanish; in March, two thousand more were ordered and in April fifty thousand. During the week, the elders circulated the announcement tracts in the vicinity of the meeting hall, announcing the weekly meeting. They also held meetings in the homes of people who became interested in the message and who were willing to open their doors

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[27]The Latter-day Saint Millennial Star, LXXXVIII (March 18, 1926), pp. 168-169.

[28]Peterson, p. 50.

for a meeting with their neighbors.[29] Elder Pratt reported that more than two hundred persons attended some of their meetings.

In spite of the elders' persistence, the newspapers would not print announcements of their services. On one occasion they presented an announcement to a large newspaper telling of the opening of the Church in Buenos Aires. The newspaper stood for "equality before the law, for widespread public education, for free access to knowledge, and the public discussion of political issues." They refused to publish any Mormon announcement, however, even in the religious news section.[30]

Finding a permanent meeting place in Buenos Aires was a problem but apparently had nothing to do with prejudice. In the first weeks meetings took place in the homes of members, but a larger hall was needed. They found six possible locations, but each location was a recreation hall and was mainly in use on Sunday nights for dances and "did not wish a religious service to disturb them."[31]

Finally, the elders found a suitable hall in downtown Buenos Aires, and began to invite people to their meetings. They purchased two dozen chairs. On February 10, they moved again, bought more chairs, and

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[29]Peterson, p. 50. [30]Peterson, p. 50

[31]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 35.

set up headquarters of the Church in a new location. The new rented hall, which had been a store, had a large room in front for meeting purposes and three good living rooms.

The first hall had been in a wealthy section of town where they had found little success.

> So they [Brothers Ballard and Pratt] decided that they would have to go out where the people were poorer. And they went out in Liniers, which was a very, very poor district. It was close to the German families, that had been converted . . . and it was there that the South American mission really began. . . . People were found there, very, very poor people, wonderful people, but very poor. And that was the trend of the mission. We worked among these people because they were the only ones who would receive us.[32]

Before, when the meetings were held in the homes of members such as Brother Friedrichs who lived on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, investigators were required to ride hours on the street car and then often walk miles down lanes, through fields, mud, and dust. With these conditions, the only ones the elders could get to come to their meetings for nearly two months were children. Elder Ballard commented on one discouraging day, "I have never seen such irreligious people."[33]

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[32]Frederick S. Williams, early missionary to South America, quoted in Michael B. Smurthwaite, "Socio-Political Factors Affecting the Growth of the Mormon Church in Argentina Since 1925" (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1968), p. 15.

[33]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 36.

In June, 1926, Elders Ballard and Pratt were instructed by the First Presidency to return home. They were replaced by B. K. Reinhold Stoof, who had been the editor of the Beobachter (a German LDS publication), and his wife Ella. Called to assist them were Elder Waldo Stoddard and Elder J. Vernon Sharp, who had served most of his mission under Elder Pratt's leadership in Mexico.[34] When the mission was turned over to the new president Elder Ballard had a good report to make. He introduced the new president into the places where they had started meetings; their largest group had increased to an average attendance of about sixty adults. The missionaries left the new elders with places for meetings every night of the week except Saturday night and three places on Sunday. They had a small group of converts in addition to eleven of their investigators who signified their intention of joining the Church and bore testimony of the truth of the message.[35]

A very significant event occurred the day of the arrival of Elder and Sister Stoof. As Elder Sharp related it:

> The date of our arrival June 6 was a Sunday. We immediately went to the branch at 8968 Rivadavia Street where a meeting was being held in which there were some German saints and a few Argentine investigators. The meeting was being conducted by President Rey L. Pratt since Elder Ballard had gone to meet us new missionaries. I was called first to give a

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[35]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 37.

> talk in Spanish. President Pratt was to interpret the speech in English to President Stoof who knew no Spanish, so that he in turn, could give a German translation of the talk. No sooner did I begin to talk than Elder Stoof said he understood perfectly every word that was being said. When I finished talking President Stoof arose and gave a word for word translation of the talk in German. At the termination of the meeting, great was the surprise of the Spanish speaking persons present when they found that Brother Stoof spoke no Spanish. To his dying day, Elder Stoof spoke of the day when he enjoyed the gift of tongues.[36]

When Elder Ballard and Pratt left for the United States on July 23, 1926, "there were as many tears shed as there had been in Salt Lake City . . . a year ago."[37] Elder Ballard was greatly loved by the people and though he could not speak either Spanish or German, he found ways to communicate. He distributed as many as five hundred tracts a day. He stated:

> I found great difficulty in fully satisfying myself because of my inability to preach the gospel to them through not knowing their language; however, I learned to read it and converse with the people. I satisfied myself in part, however, by assisting in the splendid work that Brother Pratt was performing, by inviting the people to our meetings, and having him translate into Spanish the testimony I wanted to bear to the people of that land. I had the privilege of visiting twelve thousand five hundred homes, giving them this printed message, and invited the people to our meetings. We held two hundred thirty four meetings, so that Brother Pratt was very busy preaching to the people.[38]

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[36]A. Theodore Tuttle, "South America . . . Land of Prophecy and Promise," The Improvement Era, LXVI (May, 1963), 352.

[37]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 36.

[38]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 36.

His was not an easy mission. A hot day's entry was, ". . . heavy electric storm; walked through mud and water; wet through and tired out . . . walked all day . . . had a headache all day. Tired out at night."[39] It was said of Elder Ballard, he did "anything that would advance the cause he represented." This often meant sweeping the dust from the floor of the room in which they met, painting chairs, or teaching children. It meant tracting in rain, it meant appealing to government officials and newspapers in the interest of the Church.[40]

His diary showed that he walked more miles, distributed more tracts, extended more invitations to attend meetings than any other missionary there. "No task was too hard, no journey too far, no responsibility too difficult for him to undertake and perform." He entered into his work with the spirit of cheerfulness and gratitude for the privilege of serving. Nothing seemed to daunt him.[41]

During the October, 1926 General Conference of the Church, the returned missionary Ballard reported:

> We enjoyed the experience, although we had to do things just like we did when we started out in the commencement of our missionary work, and like we did when we traveled without purse

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[39]Hinckley, p. 101.

[40]Hinckley, p. 102.

[41]Hinckley, p. 102.

> or scrip. It was the most difficult piece of missionary work that I have undertaken, but I thank the Lord that success has come out of it, that a foundation has been laid, and I am convinced that it is possible for the gospel to be carried to all people of that land.[42]

Elder Ballard said that it was a long hard fight but that he had no word of censure for the people. The people had prejudices against the missionaries because they were not Catholic and were foreigners. The government gave them no opposition, notwithstanding the union of church and state. The elders were able to lay the foundation of the Church in that land.[43]

When he left Buenos Aires there were twenty members of the Church, some of whom had been previously baptized in Germany, the others having been baptized in two baptismal services held under his direction. After arriving back in Salt Lake, Elder Ballard received word of more baptisms having been performed. The Church membership included Germans, Spaniards, and Italians, ". . . who are as faithful Latter-day Saints as can be found in any mission."[44]

At a testimony meeting held in Buenos Aires just before Elder Ballard left South America he

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[42]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 34.

[43]Ballard, Conference Report, 1926, p. 34.

[44]Melvin J. Ballard, "South American Mission," Liahona, the Elders' Journal, XXIV (October 5, 1926), 186.

uttered a significant prophecy:

> 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 here. It will be divided into more than one mission and will be one of the strongest in the Church. The work here is the smallest that it will ever be. The day will come when the Lamanites in this land will be given a chance. The South American Mission will be a power in the Church.[45]

Although Elder Ballard expressed confidence that the land was a fertile field for the missionaries, he said nothing phenomenal marked the beginning of the missionary work there.[46] After six months of work, he and his associates had made a small but secure beginning which was destined to develop into many missions and bring many people into the Church.

Rheinhold Stoof continued as president of the South American Mission for ten years and steady but slow progress was made. In 1935 the South American Mission was divided into the Argentine and Brazilian missions.[47] Ten years later still, in 1945, there were only 1,200 members of the Church in the two missions.[48] "The work

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[45]Ballard Family, Melvin J. Ballard, Crusader for Righteousness (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 93.

[46]Ballard, Liahona, p. 186.

[47]Wallace G. Fox, "A Historical Resume: Missions of South America," The Improvement Era, 1935, p. 746.

[48]"Mission Membership Statistics and Officers," 1945-1960, located in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

of the Lord will grow slowly for a time here just as an oak grows slowly from an acorn," Elder Ballard had prophecied. W. Ernest Young was presiding over the Argentine Mission, including fifteen branches and six districts, and W. W. Seegmiller was presiding over nearly the same number of branches and districts in the Brazilian Mission. No other South American countries were included in the missions of 1945. Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Paraguay, and the other nations of South America had not been included in the missionary work up to that time.

Chapter 3

# THE SEED SWELLS

During World War II proselyting in the two missions had almost come to a standstill. Elders were no longer sent there and in many cases those serving in South America were called home before their missions were completed. The two mission presidents and their wives were the only remaining officers in the missions and could visit each branch only once every two months.[1] In Argentina, Mission President Young's feeling was that he should try merely to "hold the fort" until the missionaries returned.[2] In Brazil, the mission president felt his efforts should be directed at simply maintaining a spirit of unity and brotherhood within the branches.

Nearly all of the activities of the branches were halted except for sacrament meeting and Sunday School. Some branches were closed entirely, usually where the local brethren were not adequately prepared to direct their activities. Other branches were without even Aaronic priesthood bearers to bless the

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[1]"Mission Annual Report," Brazil, 1945.

[2]W. Ernest Young, oral interview, February 23, 1973, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 103.

sacrament,[3] and in one case a faithful district president traveled hundreds of miles each month to facilitate the blessing of the sacrament in outlying branches.[4] Women even directed some branches for a time.[5]

A few convert baptisms were made during this period, and President Young wrote at the end of 1945, "Financially, the mission has progressed immensely, and spiritually, the mission's morale is higher than ever."[6]

The weight of leadership which fell to the members during this period was in many cases assumed admirably. In Brazil, Mission President W. W. Seegmiller had some misgivings at first. Speaking in General Conference he said,

> When President McKay told me that I was to evacuate the missionaries from the Brazilian Mission, I said: "What will we do then?" He said: "Just do your best." In that last meeting . . . I could hear the members whispering . . . "It is too bad we cannot hold services anymore. President Seegmiller cannot stay here all the time." So I told them: "Services will be held as usual every Sunday." After I had said that I just wondered how, and I had already written to the First Presidency and told them that there was no prospect for presidency in the Brazilian Mission, there was no prospect for priesthood.[7]

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[3]Mensajero Deseret [Buenos Aires], April, 1945, p. 30.

[4]A. Theodore Tuttle, "South America . . . Land of Prophecy and Promise," The Improvement Era, May, 1963, p. 352.

[5]Mensajero, October, 1945, p. 3.

[6]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," December 31, 1945.

[7]W. W. Seegmiller, Conference Report, October, 1945, p. 147.

Despite his pessimism, President Seegmiller proceeded to install local priesthood members in all the branch positions. He was pleasantly surprised at the way the members carried forward.

> I felt justly ashamed of myself for having written to the First Presidency and said: "There is no opportunity for presidency and priesthood in Brazil. We have no men. The few we have are not worthy." I forgot . . . that God is at the helm, that all things under his direction are possible.[8]

The work did go forward even without the missionaries, although there were many problems. Most of the members were not sufficiently experienced in the Church to handle the situations that arose.[9] The new leaders were without administrative manuals to follow and often strife resulted from their decisions.[10] A number of members were lost track of during this period as novice clerks attempted to keep records.[11] In 1946 the Argentine Mission reported almost forty members lost.[12]

When missionaries started coming back in 1946 and 1947, the mission presidents considered it best to return the main branch and district leadership positions to the elders, though this caused dissatisfaction among

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[8]Seegmiller, Conference Report, 1945, p. 147.

[9]"Mission Annual Report," Argentina, 1951.

[10]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," July 6, 1950.

[11]Seegmiller, Conference Report, 1945, p. 147.

[12]"Mission Annual Report," Argentina, 1946.

some of the local leaders, many of whom had capably served.[13] Generally, however, these brethren were glad to have the elders resume the major leadership positions, while their own experience was put to use in other branch callings.[14]

The work was eventually reopened in nearly every city where missionaries had labored before the war and in several new areas as well. Some difficulty was encountered though with the elders arriving so rapidly and in such large numbers that at times there were no senior companions with any language ability. Within a few months, however, this situation had righted itself and the work began to progress smoothly.

A blessing in the return of missionaries at this time was that most of the new elders were war veterans and in general quite mature, hard working, and without the problem of homesickness.[15] In addition, according to Harold Brown, a later Argentine mission president who was living in South America at the time, there seemed to be a change in attitude among the people of South America following the war with its tragedies and problems which

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[13]"Mission Annual Report," Argentina, 1951.

[14]W. Ernest Young interview, January 8, 1975, Provo, Utah, also "Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February 23, 1952.

[15]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February 23, 1952.

caused them to be more reflective, more receptive to new ideas.[16] Thus proselyting efforts began to yield greater success than ever before.

The Uruguayan Mission was the first to be added to the two existing South American missions. This action in 1947, signaled a new era in the history of the Church in South America. An atmosphere of friendliness toward the Mormons had begun to develop in some areas. Favorable publicity had been given the Church in Uruguay in 1940 when an Argentine missionary, Elder Rolf Larsen, was chosen to represent Argentina in the South American Basketball Championships in Montivideo, Uruguay.[17] Because of Elder Larsen's expert playing ability and good sportsmanship, he received a great amount of publicity, and a cordial atmosphere developed toward the Church.[18]

There had been no members of the Church in Uruguay until 1944 when the Montivideo Branch of the Argentine Mission was organized, with Fredrick S. Williams, a former Argentine Mission president, as branch president. The branch had a membership of twelve, four of whom were returned missionaries. No proselyting was carried on, but because of all the male members of the branch

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[16]Harold Brown, oral interview, October 4, 1973, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 24.

[17]Tuttle, Era, p. 368.

[18]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," August 31, 1947.

were either employed by the United States or the Uruguayan governments, they were able to form friendships with high government officials. This greatly benefitted the Church when the mission was organized there later. Several of the United States officials had worked under J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in Mexico, when he was ambassador there, and because of their respect for him, they too were very friendly toward the Church.[19]

In August 1946, a small delegation of former missionaries to South America who were interested in the advancement of the Church in that land, visited with President George Albert Smith in his office in Salt Lake City.[20] Spokesman for the group was former Montividean Branch President Fredrick S, Williams, who explained that they had come to request that the Church send more missionaries to South America. They were convinced that the time was right for proselyting work to be increased and opened up to a greater degree, and felt moved to talk to President Smith about it, since up to this time none of the General Authorities possessed first hand knowledge of the Church in South America. They recommended Uruguay as the most desirable place for mission expansion. President Smith listened in silence to what they had to say for almost

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[19]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," Sugust 31, 1947.

[20]Fredrick S. Williams, taped message to Uruguayan Mission Reunion, Spring, 1972.

an hour. Elder Williams recalled:

> Finally after a lengthy presentation accompanied by complete silence on the part of President Smith, I stopped. He arose, excused himself and left the room. At this juncture we wondered how long we would remain on the rolls of the Church. He came back with President McKay.[21]

President Smith then asked Elder Williams to rehearse the whole matter again for President McKay. Then he asked that they write up their recommendations to be submitted to the Council of the Twelve for consideration.

A few months later Brother Williams was called as mission president to open the new Uruguayan Mission and establish headquarters in Montivideo. He left for Uruguay on July 24, 1947, one hundred years after the coming of the Mormons to Great Salt Lake Valley.

Having lived in Uruguay previously, President Williams knew many of the leading citizens. This was an advantage that helped put the mission far ahead of what it would have been otherwise.[22] The vice president of Uruguay invited President Williams and his missionaries to his ranch for a barbeque at the request of the Uruguayan national president. The Uruguayan president, reported the vice president, had asked him to convey this message:

> We want you to know that you are welcome in Uruguay. We have studied you and your organization

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[21]Williams, taped message.

[22]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," January, 1948.

> and we are particularly interested and pleased with your youth organization. We want you to know that you have just as much official standing as any other church . . . if you ever have any problems, we want you to know you have friends in high places, and do not hesitate to come and see us.[23]

Such an attitude of friendliness and good will resulted in great progress from the start in the Uruguayan Mission. (This attitude was far different from what the Church would shortly experience in Argentina.)

The first two elders arrived in the new Uruguayan Mission as transfers from the Argentine Mission. They both commented that the Uruguayan people were more friendly than the Argentines, since complete freedom of religion existed and people seemed to be more interested in new ideas.[24] This was a reason for greater success in proselyting. One elder commented, "You could feel a spirit of freedom and liberty which you did not feel in Argentina."[25] They also found less Catholic dominance in Uruguay, with one third of the people being non-Catholic, that is liberals, Protestants, and atheists. This was a great change from the almost totally Catholic population of Argentina.

The first large group of elders came in rapid succession but with no knowledge of Spanish. President

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[23]Williams, taped message.

[24]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," 1947.

[25]Michael B. Smurthwaite, "Socio-Political Factors Affecting the Growth of the Mormon Church in Argentina Since 1925," (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1968), p. 136.

Williams jokingly told ten newly arrived missionaries that the first five of them off the ship were the senior companions! The elders were often under the necessity of having President Williams accompany them and talk to their investigators in some understandable Spanish. The non-members often said to him,

> Would you please tell me what it's all about? They /the missionaries/ came here to the door and knocked on it and gave me these tracts and pamphlets. I didn't understand them, but their faces were so imploring, and the feelings; I couldn't turn them down.[26]

Although their knowledge of Spanish was meager, the elders still communicated.

One significant experience concerned a group of the first elders called to the Uruguayan Mission. Eleven of the new missionaries had boarded a ship in Vancouver, B.C. on the 26th of October, 1947. The ship was to travel south along the west coast of South America and then north to Montivideo. On the 23rd of November, as they passed through the Straits of Megellean, one of the elders, Arthur F. Smith, was stricken with appendicitus.[27] There were no medical facilities on the ship and when his condition worsened, the ship's captain gave orders for the ship to return to the city of Punta Arenas, Chile.

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[26]Frederick S. Williams, oral interview, December 28, 1972, Downey, California, Typescript, p, 105.

[27]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission, 1947, also Young interview, 1975.

Elder Smith was administered to by the other missionaries and then taken off the ship, alone and unconscious. All of the elder's money and valuables were kept by his companions and none of the elders were allowed to accompany him, since they had no visas for Chile. The ship proceeded on its way.

Providentially there was a North American couple, Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Morrison, staying at a hotel in Punta Arenas at the time. When Mr. Morrison learned of the Mormon elder, he visited him in the hospital, where the elder had been successfully operated on. Finding the young man was without funds, Mr. Morrison paid the hospital and doctor bills and took Elder Smith to the hotel where he and his wife could care for him. Later he purchased a plane ticket to Montivideo for Elder Smith, and saw him on his way.[28]

The mission president was cognizant of the hand of the Lord in this event, and wrote:

> We feel that the Lord was mindful of the administration and not only healed him, but also raised up friends for this servant who was in a strange land unable to speak or understand the language.[29]

The Church flourished in Uruguay although it was several months before baptisms were authorized. In the meantime several branch MIA's were staffed completely

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[28]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," 1947.

[29]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," 1947.

with non members who helped by giving talks, bearing their testimonies, and bringing new people to Church.[30] Through the use of music, sports, and dance, many young students were attracted to the Church.[31] This was especially evident in the early years of the mission.

In 1949, two years after the opening of the mission, more than 250 persons were baptized, which were more converts than the Argentine and Braziliam missions combined had that year. The mission president attributed this growth directly to the fact that there was less Catholic influence and control in Uruguay and that many of the people had a good, liberal education.[32]

The story of how Uruguay's sister, Paraguay, was opened to missionary work began with a former missionary to Argentina, Samuel Skousen. He was living in Asuncion, Paraguay in 1948 and was working for the U.S. government. He and his wife regularly held Sunday School and other church meetings in their home. One family who had been attending their meetings wanted to be baptized, but Brother Skousen, not knowing what mission jurisdiction they would fall under, wrote the First Presidency inquiring what he

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[30]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," June 1948.

[31]Brown interview, p. 21.

[32]Williams interview p. 91. The Church today has become the second largest religious denomination in Uruguay according to former mission president L. Sidney Shreeve.

should do.[33] He was directed to contact President Williams at Montivideo, who helped him arrange for the baptism of the Rodriguez family. This took place November 18, 1948 in Asuncion.

A branch of the Church was organized following this event, and Brother Skousen was set apart as branch president. In 1948 Paraguay came officially under the direction of the Uruguayan Mission. Permission was given later to begin active proselyting work there.

Proselyting in Paraguay proved to be quite different than in Uruguay, for there were many people of Lamanite descent. The Paraguayan government was not very stable either, so the elders worked to establish friendly relations with United States and Paraguayan officials. This prompted President Williams to comment facetiously to the Uruguayan missionaries,

> I am only sorry they [the Paraguayan missionaries] have to go to official receptions around the different embassies, eat North American cooking in several homes and such things; of course, they don't enjoy doing it, but it is a part of their work![34]

The American ambassador in Paraguay had explained to President Williams that it was a rather inopportune time to inaugurate the work there since it was a Holy

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[33]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," July, 1948.

[34]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," April 30, 1950.

Year and the Catholic Church was stirring up its people.[35] He added though, that the Paraguayan people needed the Mormon Church badly and he would do anything he could to help the elders get started. He introduced them to many prominent people.

President Williams was able to get a permit to establish the Church in Paraguay just one week after submitting the application. This was unusual considering the normal red tape. In addition, the permit was permanent. The only other church with a permanent permit was the Catholic Church.[36] All of the Protestant churches had to get their permits renewed every month. The Lord had blessed the Latter-day Saints in the opening of this new country to missionary work.

The social and moral structure of the country was such that the men of Paraguay were generally indifferent to religion, as was true in other South American countries.[37] Thus at first, much more success was found proselyting among the women and children. Statistics reflected this trend in all the missions at that time, for they reported usually three or four times as many active women as men.

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[35]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," January 5, 1950.

[36]Williams, taped message.

[37]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," April 30, 1950.

Converts made in the twenty-three years between 1925 and 1948, before the visit of Apostle Stephen L. Richards, had never seen or heard of a General Authority of the Church, therefore his visit was a greatly anticipated event.[38] It was the first visit of a General Authority to Brazil. Receptions were held for Elder Richards so the members could meet him,and his friendly smile and warm personality immediately won their hearts. Many of them had come expecting to see a man of much sobriety.[39] Elder Richards commented that the South American Saints were respectful "to an almost embarrassing degree."[40] They were awed by the presence of a living apostle.

During his 18,000 mile tour, Elder Richards visited all three missions. His trip created much favorable publicity for the Church. Reporters were impressed with him and one of them noted:

> We must sincerely confess that his apostolic profession made us feel as if we were in the presence of a man who had something in common with those who are usually found . . . in permanent contact with divine powers. Perhaps it was his dress,

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[38] Gaviota (Brazilian Mission Magazine), February, 1948, p. 48.

[39] "Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission", February, 1948.

[40] Stephen L. Richards, Conference Report, October, 1948, p. 146.

> perhaps his visage, perhaps the amazement of a strange doctrine.[41]

Apostle Richards' arrival had been reported in all the major newspapers including eight of Buenos Aires' largest dailies. In addition to the routine arrival reports, several of these newspapers included articles presenting the basic Mormon doctrines, the greater percentage of which were favorable to the Church.

To the three mission presidents, Elder Richards recommended improvement of their present chapel facilities, which generally were small, rented homes doubling as both meeting house and missionary living quarters. The presidents were also instructed to buy land and present cost estimates for new chapels. Elder Richards encouraged them to work toward the use of more local leadership, which would provide the Latins necessary experience in directing the affairs of the Church.[42] He could see that South America desperately needed the gospel and felt that the most promising prospects were among the youth. He reported,

> The nations of that land need more than anything else the true concepts of liberty which arise out of a correct understanding of the relationship of man to God and his fellow man.[43]

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[41] La Critica /Buenos Aires, Argentina7, February 4, 1948, located in "Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February, 1948.

[42] "Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February, 1948.

[43] Richards, Conference Report, October, 1948, p. 146.

There was some feeling among the mission presidents that little progress could be made until more funds were appropriated by the Church to erect respectable chapels. W. Ernest Young, president of the Argentine Mission, in 1948 stated:

> We feel that some financial outlays must be invested here in the building of chapels; and, even the purchasing of lands before any marked interest and growth may be expected.[44]

Although Elder Richards' impression of the work there was generally favorable, he was cautious in his recommendation of funding:

> I do not intend to represent these people as having all the characteristics of an honest people with the integrity necessary for a great advancement of the work of the gospel. Expenditure of missionary effort and funds should proceed with precaution. I am not in favor of going all out in making big investments unless more advancement is made than has been demonstrated up to now.[45]

The newly formed Uruguayan Mission received most of the funds that eventually were allocated for South American chapel needs in those early years.

With regard to the foreign language problem, Elder Richards felt that special language training of missionaries in the United States for three months before their departure would not seem advisable at the time, for

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[44]"Mission Annual Report, Argentina, 1946.

[45]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February, 1948.

practical training in the missionfield seemed to get the best results in the given time.[46] Elder Richards' visit benefitted the mission greatly, and he returned to the leading councils of the Church with first-hand knowledge of the needs and conditions existing there.

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[46]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February, 1948.

## Chapter 4

## THE SEED SPROUTS

President David O. McKay's visit in 1954 was a much heralded, long awaited event, for it was the first visit ever of a President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to South America. Uruguayan Mission President L. Sidney Shreeve commented that the announcement of President McKay's impending visit had about the same effect on the South American Saints as an announcement of a visit from an angel might have had on Utah Saints.[1] President and Sister McKay traveled with their son Robert, who was a former Argentine missionary. Reporters were impressed with the fact that in spite of the McKays advanced ages (President McKay was over eighty), they were possessed with youthful spirits and a happy, positive outlook.[2]

In Argentina President McKay met with national president Juan D. Peron for a cordial interview. This visit took place on February 3, 1954, in the Casa Rosada, Argentina's chief executive mansion. Peron welcomed

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[1]L. Sidney Shreeve interview, January 9, 1975, Provo, Utah.

[2]Deseret News, Church News [Salt Lake City], February 20, 1954.

President McKay in English, after which President McKay thanked him for the considerate attitude of the Argentine government toward its citizens who wished to become Mormons. He expressed gratitude for Argentina's freedom of religion.

President Peron displayed a surprising knowledge of the Church and admiration for its members. He knew of the Word of Wisdom, remarking to President McKay, "I would like to offer you a drink, but you don't drink nor smoke nor drink tea nor coffee. What can I do to make you happy?"[3] President McKay replied that he had made them happy already. The Prophet was impressed with Peron's graciousness and commented later on Peron's

> courteous consideration of our ideals in regard to the Word of Wisdom. I have been in the presence of a good many leaders and prominent rulers but I would like to say . . . that I think the President's gesture towards us in that regard was indicative of a nature refined and considerate such as I have never seen manifest on any other occasion. It was superb.[4]

When Peron was informed that President McKay was to address the Saints on Sunday in a downtown hall, he desired that the one thousand-seat National Teatro de

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[3]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February, 1954; also Mrs. Lee Valentine interview, January 8, 1975, Provo, Utah. Her husband was president of the Argentine Mission when President McKay visited, and her father, W. Ernest Young was the first president of the mission in 1935 and later called again as mission president.

[4]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February, 1954.

Cervantes be provided for the occasion. Although President McKay protested this kind offer, Peron insisted. Their visit concluded with the two men embracing in the traditional Argentina abrazo. As he left, President McKay expressed gratitude for the courtesy extended by Peron and his kind gesture in permitting the use of the National Theatre.

In his address in the Theatre the following Sunday, the prophet paid tribute to the Argentine president in these words:

> Your President Peron is a great leader, a genial host, a true gentleman. I take this opportunity publicly of expressing the gratitude of the First Presidency of the Church for his favorable attitude toward our Church. We advise our missionaries not to enter into the politics of any country in which our Church is established but I wish to say that I am in hearty accord with the fundamental principles of this government.[5]

It was a blessing that the Saints were able to gather in the theatre, 800 at each session. Five hundred of them would have been turned away had they met in the small hall as originally planned. "I am still pinching myself," said Robert McKay, "Things like that just don't happen in a country heretofore so difficult for our

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[5]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February 7, 1954. Some of the members who were against Peron resented President McKay accepting this offer and refused to attend the conference according to Mrs. Lee Valentine.

missionaries to penetrate." He said this referring to Peron's magnanimity.[6] President McKay made other favorable comments about the government and Peron. Excerpts of his talk were broadcast that evening on the national radio station, accompanied by recorded music of the Tabernacle Choir.

President McKay visited all three missions in South America, mingling with thousands of loyal Saints and speaking in scores of meetings. The members showed their deep love for the prophet and their gratitude for his visit by turning out in great numbers to hear him. In Sao Paulo, Brazil, poorer members of the Church who had traveled great distances to hear the prophet, spent the night sleeping on the floor and benches of the chapel awaiting the morning when they would see their beloved leader.[7]

The saints sang beautiful hymns in honor of President McKay and presented native mementoes and souvenirs to him and his wife. Many hundreds of non-members came to hear the prophet, and the press releases created a great deal of positive publicity for the Church.

The prophet's visit among the Saints helped develop in their minds a feeling of devotion to and

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[6]Deseret News, Church News, [Salt Lake City], February 20, 1954, p. 2.

[7]A. Theodore Tuttle, "South America . . . Land of Prophecy and Promise," The Improvement Era, LXVI (May, 1963), 355.

identity with the Church. They gained a new appreciation for having a "mouthpiece of the Lord" on earth and a strengthened concept of the unity that exists with other members of the Church world wide. President McKay's tour was a significant milestone in the progress of the Church in South America and remains today only the second time in the history of the Church in South America that a president has visited there.[8]

President McKay's visit was followed that same year by one from Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve. Touring all the missions, he gave valuable counsel and instruction. He suggested that branches be opened in Chile and Peru, and also recommended that there be regular audits of Church funds. He advised the discontinuance of mission-wide conferences, saying that they imposed too great a financial burden on the people, who sometimes paid a month's wages for transportation to these conferences. In all matters his counsal was heeded, and the Church benefitted thereby. In a lengthy report to the First Presidency, Elder Petersen made recommendations that would shortly see fulfillment and concluded with the statement, "I feel that South America is a 'land of

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[8]A March, 1975 trip to South America was made by President Spencer W. Kimball to attend the Area General Conference of the Church in Buenos Aires and São Paulo.

promise' for the gospel."[9] He had left behind "a newly inspired corps of missionaries and officers as well as a thrilled and happy membership."[10]

When Elder Henry D. Moyle was sent to South America in 1956, President McKay told him, "Now you go to South America and the Lord will give you a revelation,"[11] His tour was marked by several revelations. He held interviews with the presidents of Uruguay and Paraguay and while in Peru and Chile he organized the first branches of the Church there.[12]

Elder Moyle had a remarkable experience in Argentina, following a meeting at which he had spoken. A gentleman came to shake hands with him, and Elder Moyle felt impressed to give him a blessing. He declared that he was of the blood of Israel through Manasseh, and that the Lord had a work for him to perform among his friends and family. This work was to teach and convert them to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It developed that the man was an investigator who, with his wife, had desired baptism into the Church, but was prevented from being baptized by a certain problem.

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[9]Elder Mark E. Petersen to the First Presidency, Spring, 1955.

[10]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," January 1, 1955.

[11]Asael T. Sorensen, oral interview, July 12, 1972, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 73.

[12]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," June, 1956.

This experience was taken by them as a manifestation from the Lord that the problem had been solved and nothing would now hinder their baptism. They soon became members of the Church.[13]

During his visit, Elder Moyle prophesied on two different occasions that the Saints in South America would some day have a temple and that Spanish speaking people in the world would accept the gospel in ever-increasing numbers.[14] He also told a large group of Brazilian missionaries that from "this time forth there would be a great spiritual awakening among the people."[15] Altogether, his tour did much to increase the faith of the members and add impetus to the work of the missionaries. Amy Valentine, wife of Argentine Mission President Lee Valentine, said that their mission was never the same after Elder Moyle's visit, so great was his influence and impact. Elder Moyle's experiences proved to be valuable when he was later called to be a counselor to President McKay in the First Presidency of the Church, with particular responsibility for missionary work.

A somber pall was cast over his tour of the

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[13]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," May 28, 1956.

[14]Tuttle, Era, p. 360.

[15]Tuttle, Era, p. 272.

Uruguayan Mission when on the 7th of June, 1956, the wife of the mission president, Frank Perry, died in Montivideo. She had been suffering for some days in a hospital, but her death was rather unexpected.

Three years after Elder Moyle's visit, Elder Spencer W. Kimball with his wife, made a seven week, 30,000 mile tour of South America, during which he dedicated three chapels, and held conferences with the mission presidents.[16] Elder Kimball gave special emphasis to proselyting work, saying that there was a great day in the imminent future for the work of the Lord in South America. He likened the South American countries to giants "just yawning and stretching and ready to go to work."[17] He also echoed the prophecy that there would some day be a temple in South America.[18]

In the same year, 1959, the Andes Mission was organized with 800 members. J. Vernon Sharp was called as mission president. He had helped Melvin J. Ballard open the South American Mission in 1925 and was the first elder to complete a mission to South America. Elder

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[16]Deseret News, Church News, [Salt Lake City], April 11, 1959, p. 14 and February 7, 1959, p. 6.

[17]Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, April, 1959, p. 27.

[18]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," January, 1959. A temple to be built by the Church in São Paulo, Brazil was announced by President Spencer W. Kimball in March, 1975.

Harold B. Lee organized the new mission which included Chile, which had formerly been part of the Argentine Mission; Peru, which had been part of the Uruguayan Mission, and later, Bolivia. The actual organization took place on November 1, 1959 in Lima, Peru, but a meeting had been held two days earlier in Santiago, Chile, explaining the organization to the Chilean Saints, since it was not possible for them to attend the Lima meeting because of the great distance involved. There was some question over the location of the mission headquarters since the mission covered such a wide area, but Lima was chosen by President McKay[19] because, as Elder Lee stated, "It was closer to Salt Lake City where the missionaries would come from."[20]

The southern headquarters of the mission was established in Santiago, Chile and though Bolivia was also part of the mission, the work did not begin there for several years because of political unrest.[21] The distances in the new mission were tremendous, some branches being as far as 2,000 miles apart and the distance

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[19] J. Vernon Sharp, oral interview, June 10, 1970, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 45.

[20] "Manuscript History of the Andes Mission," October 31, 1959.

[21] Deseret News, Church News, [Salt Lake City], November 21, 1959, p. 3.

from north to south ends of the mission was 4,200 miles.

The Church had been established in Peru about fifty years earlier when A. W. McCune, a Salt Lake City businessman, established a mining company there. Several Mormons were employed at the mines, and they soon organized a branch of the Church.[22] Meetings were held throughout the years, but no proselyting was attempted. When President McKay made his tour of South America in 1954, he visited the few members who were then living in Lima. Elder Mark E. Petersen, after his visit later in 1954, wrote the First Presidency recommending that missionary work among the Lamanites in Peru be undertaken:

> I recommend that Peru be added to the Uruguayan Mission. . . . Peru offers a remarkable opportunity for preaching the gospel to the Indians. At least half of the population of the city of Lima is of Indian extraction. These people all speak Spanish. In the interior there are many cities which run as high as 75% Indian, who speak the native Indian language--one language, not many dialects. The literacy among the native population in Peru is regarded as being higher than in most South American countries. There is religious liberty to a marked degree, and there is also much dissatisfaction among the Indians so far as the prevailing Church is concerned.[23]

Two missionaries were sent there from the Uruguayan Mission in 1956. Fredrick S. Williams, who was residing in Lima at the time and later became the first branch

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[22]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," September 1, 1956.

[23]Mark E. Petersen to First Presidency, Spring, 1955.

president, aided the elders in getting established.[24] Elder Williams had written the First Presidency and asked, "How could we arrange to have our little Mormon group come under the mission?"[25] These first missionaries made an impressive start, holding as many as forty-nine cottage meetings a week, many of these with Lamanite families.[26]

President Lee said at the organization of the mission:

> I believe that we are not far from the place where the history of the people of Lehi commenced in western America . . . the two most logical ports are Santiago and Lima . . . these are without question the people to whom it was said that the gospel from the Nephite prophets was to come.[27]

There were close to 40,000,000 full or part blooded descendants of Lehi in South America and Nephi had prophesied that they would hear the gospel.[28] He said,

> And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored

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[24]Williams interview, p. 70. Williams thus became the first branch president in Peru, which was a part of the Uruguayan Mission over which he had previously presided. The same circumstances had existed earlier in 1944 when he became the first branch president in Uruguay, which was then part of the Argentine Mission over which he had also previously presided.

[25]Tuttle, Era, p. 366.

[26]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," November 15, 1956.

[27]"Manuscript History of the Andes Mission," November 6, 1959.

[28]Tuttle, Era, p. 353.

> unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.[29]

The opening of this Andes Mission also began the fulfillment of the prophecy uttered by Elder Melvin J. Ballard on the day of the dedication of the land of South America. He had said that many Europeans in South America "would receive the gospel; but that, ultimately, the work of the mission would be to the Indians."[30] Argentine Mission President E. W. Young had felt at one time that "the great hope of this [Argentine] mission will be in the conversion of thousands of the British community."[31] There were 500,000 Britons in Argentina at the time [1948],[32] and a large Welch colony in Southern Argentina had been proselyted heavily, but not very successfully.

Elder Lee emphasized the importance of the work with the Lamanites, since there had been very little work among the Lamanites in South America up to this time. Elder Stephen L. Richards had stated in 1948 that there were no Lamanite members of the Church in South America.[33]

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[29] II Nephi 30:5.

[30] Bryant S. Hinckley, Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin J. Ballard, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1949), p. 97.

[31] "Mission Annual Report," Argentina, 1948.

[32] W. Ernest Young interview, January 8, 1975, Provo, Utah.

[33] Stephen L. Richards, Conference Report, October, 1948, p. 146.

Elder Lee said:

> This is the center of some of the greatest Indian populations in the world and in all likelihood we may be near the place in these two countries of Chile and Peru where there has been a greater intermixture of Indian blood than any other country on this continent and also the fact that there is no place in South America where there has been a greater acceptance of the gospel in so short a time.[34]

Henry D. Moyle had helped lay the groundwork for establishing the mission in Peru when he visited in 1956. He had to convince the Peruvian government to let the Church come into the country and organize the mission so he promised that as a result of the mission, between $200,000 and $500,000 a year would be spent by the Church and its missionaries in that land.[35] This promise was fulfilled to a far greater extent than the figures he gave, as buildings were erected, missionaries arrived in great numbers, and the mission was established and equipped.

At the time President Lee came to organize the Andes Mission an event occurred which helped the mission in getting started. As Elder Lee and his entourage were preparing to visit the ancient ruins of Maichu Pichu in Peru, the Andes Mission President J. Vernon Sharp was taken ill and was forced to stay in his room at a hotel for some days. A doctor was called in who seemed to

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[34]"Manuscript History of the Andes Mission," November 6, 1958.

[35]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," July 8, 1956.

enjoy talking to Elder Sharp as much as treating him, and they became good friends. A few weeks later Elder Sharp met this doctor at the main airport in Lima and discovered that he was head of all health services for Peru. The doctor introduced President Sharp to all of the customs and government officials so that he became personally acquainted with them. This greatly facilitated the entry of missionaries into that nation. President Sharp said:

> There was no legal fuss, no legal mess, and also because of him we were able to have access to go in and out of the airport where other people couldn't, to meet the Church officials and to take care of any business that we had there.[36]

Only those who have experienced Latin American red tape can appreciate what a great blessing resulted from Elder Sharp's chance meeting with the doctor.

At the time of the Chilean earthquake in 1959 the Church received much excellent publicity in that land because of its part in assisting those stricken by the disaster. The Church headquarters in Salt Lake City sent a large shipment of warm clothing and antibiotics down; these were, in fact, the first relief articles of any kind to get into Santiago. When the mission president, J. Vernon Sharp, called upon the minister of foreign affairs to offer his help, the minister responded with,

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[36]Sharp interview, p. 50.

> You know, I had a feeling you were going to come. We've been reading a bit about you Mormon folks and how in times of need, you help. . . . I have been expecting you in our hour of trouble, I knew you would come since I know how interested you are in us and our people.[37]

The foreign minister took President Sharp to meet the other ministers of the cabinet to see under which department the Mormon relief program would fall.

Previous to this time the Church had experienced some difficulty in bringing missionaries into the country, but after the favorable exposure of the Church to cabinet officials, a letter went out to government agencies stating that there would be no further limit to the number of Mormon missionaries admitted to Chile.

Because of the laws of that country, the relief items which arrived from the Church in Salt Lake City were not permitted to be distributed in Chile without permission of the governor of the state. The governor told the mission president that although they desperately needed the supplies, the law said that 100 percent duty would have to be charged on all items coming through the port. "We can't give it to you and then ransom it out," President Sharp protested. The governor replied, "The only thing you can do is present your case to the Senate."[38]

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[37]"Manuscript History of the Andes Mission," May, 1960; also Sharp interview, p. 57.

[38]Sharp interview, p. 61.

The National Senate was then in session and President Sharp, with a newly made friend from the Red Cross organization, appeared before the Chilean Senate, where he received permission for the relief items to come in duty free.[39] In a recent interview, President Sharp summed up the events:

> Now, you see that had we done it our way, things would have slipped in very easily and nobody would have known that we did it. Now we didn't want publicity, we didn't do it to get publicity, but in the Lord's way, the cabinet knew, the senators knew, and everybody knew what the Church had been doing.[40]

In gratitude for this help the Chilean government issued several of the elders "safe conduct" letters, which meant they were permitted to ride any means of transportation in Chile free of charge, and receive complete franking privileges.[41] Later a Chilean parliamentary delegation came to Salt Lake City and thanked the First Presidency for the help of the Church.

The missionaries were very valuable as translators in these times of crisis. At the time of the 1960 Peruvian earthquake, the United States sent planes loaded with blankets, tents, and other relief items for the earthquake victims; but a few hours after their arrival, the commanding officer of the relief airlift, who did not

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[39]Sharp interview, p. 59. The new friend, Richard Tomlin, later wrote the Red Cross that when he arrived on the scene of the earthquake, the only ones who knew what they were doing were the Mormons.

[40]Sharp interview, p. 59. [41]Sharp interview, p. 61.

speak Spanish, said he was leaving immediately for the States "because he couldn't get along with the Peruvian people. They had frightened him so much that he [got] into [his] car, slammed the door shut, and left them." The mission president came to the rescue telling the officer that the problem was just a misunderstanding because of language and added, "We have some elders here that know these people, know the city like the back of your hand." The officer was persuaded to stay and use the elders, who worked for him several days.[42]

The Chilean sector of the Andes Mission had been opened originally in 1956 as part of the Argentine Mission. Two elders were sent from Argentina by permission of the First Presidency. The B. F. Fotheringham family, who were members of the Church from Utah, lived in Santiago and had suggested earlier to Elder Mark E. Petersen that the work be opened there. Brother Fotheringham had been an Argentine missionary and now worked for the Kodak Company in Chile. Elder Petersen reported to the First Presidency in 1955 that Brother Fotheringham

> strongly urges missionary work in Santiago, says the time is ripe, the government attitude is good, the psychology of the people is liberal and favorable and that there is a growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing denomination down there. There are many trades people, making up a good middle class who, he thinks, might be interested in our message.[43]

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[42]Sharp interview, p. 54.

[43]Mark E. Petersen to the First Presidency, Spring, 1955.

The Fotheringhams aided the elders in establishing themselves and organizing the first meetings, which were held in their home. At the time the Santiago Branch was organized on July 5, 1956, visiting Apostle Henry D. Moyle spoke, promising that the people would accept the gospel rapidly and that soon there would be a mission there with at least ten branches. He said that the priesthood would "bind many fine families together."[44] Three years later when Chile was organized with Peru into the Andes Mission, a baptismal service was held for forty-five converts, which added 10 percent to the total membership of the Church in Chile.[45]

When President Joseph Fielding Smith toured Chile in 1960 he visited some property in Vina del Mar that the Church was purchasing. Mission President Sharp reported,

> As we went into that beautiful place, there is a well and beautiful trees, President Smith shut his eyes and he said, "You should buy more land because I see that someday there will be a temple built here."[46]

In Brazil, Church growth had been slow at first, but increased more rapidly the last five years of the 1950's. Brazilian Mission President Bangeter said,

> The reception the Church has had in Brazil, I feel has been warm and friendly to an out-

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[44]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," July 5, 1956.

[45]Deseret News, Church News [Salt Lake City], November 21, 1959, p. 3.

[46]Sharp interview, p. 62.

> standing degree. . . . Brazilians generally have always and traditionally been friendly to North Americans.[47]

Time magazine faceciously explained the growth and its results by quoting a Brazilian man who jovially complained,

> The danger to the world is not Communism but Mormonism. You people work fast in our country with smiles and songs. Then you have lots of children, who study and get ahead of our kids. Then you get yourselves elected to government positions and boom! you pass a law banning coffee and Brazil falls flat on her face.[48]

In 1959 there were 3,500 members of the Church in Brazil and on September 20, 1959, the Brazilian South Mission was organized from the Brazilian Mission by Elder Harold B. Lee. Ground was broken also at that time for the São Paulo Branch chapel.[49] A conference was held in conjunction with Elder Lee's visit at which five hundred persons attended, which was the largest gathering of Brazilian Saints up to that time.[50] On the day of the new mission's organization Elder Lee prophesied that one day another mission would be created within the new one. That prophecy has since seen fulfillment.

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[47]William Grant Bangeter interview, October 8, 1974, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 4.

[48]Time, November 28, 1960, p. 77.

[49]Brazilian Mission, box #4, located at Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

[50]Deseret News, Church News, [Salt Lake City], October 3, 1959, p. 5.

It was the great increase in convert baptisms and the great distances in Brazil which necessitated the creation of the new mission. With the mission divided, new areas could be opened. Recife, the third largest city in Brazil, was opened, and though the city was 1,500 miles from mission headquarters, its branch flourished.[51]

Asael T. Sorenson, who had been released as Brazilian mission president only six monthly previously was recalled as president of the new Brazilian South Mission. He explained that part of the reason for the great growth in the mission was due to a prophetic statement made by Elder Henry D. Moyle in a missionary meeting in Rio de Janiero. He had said:

> From this time forward the Spirit of the Lord will move upon these people. They will dream dreams, they will have visions. They will see the Church in dreams, they will see the Book of Mormon and other things.[52]

In the succeeding years many missionaries testified that contacts which they had made had seen the Church in a dream or they had seen two of the missionaries in dreams. When the missionaries came tracting the people would remember their dream and invite the elders in immediately. "They would have already seen the Book of Mormon, the gold plates and other things; just countless testified

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[51] Bangeter interview, October 22, 1974, p. 7.

[52] Sorenson interview, p. 67.

of these things," reported President Sorenson.[53]

Mission President William Grant Bangeter, who later became a General Authority of the Church, helped explain the growth that came to Brazil at this time this way: "There seemed to come an unfolding, an awakening, and dawning of understanding and of spiritual strength among our missionaries that was very remarkable."[54] All of these factors contributed to the great increase in convert baptisms not only in Brazil, but throughout South America in the late 1950's.

Elder Harold B. Lee's 1959 visit to organize the Andes and Brazil South missions was significant in several ways. On the occasion of the organization of the Andes Mission, Elder Lee declared with prophetic insight into the future of the Church in that land:

> This marks the beginning of what appears to be new day for mission work in South America . . . the greatest growth in all these missions has been in the last five years. Brazil had less than 1000 members five years ago and now has more than 3700. In 1953, 1954, and 1955, there were less than 80 converts in the Argentine Mission, but last year they had more than 600 . . . in my judgment there are no missions in the world which hold so much promise as the missions of South America.[55]

Elder Lee toured all of the missions, holding

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[53]Sorenson interview, p. 67.

[54]Bangeter interview, October 8, 1974, p. 22.

[55]"Manuscript History of the Andes Mission," November 6, 1959.

missionary meetings, interviews with 560 elders, district conferences, meeting with government leaders, attending youth activity nights, receptions, press conferences, officers and teachers meetings, mission presidency meetings, etc. His rigorous itinerary would have wearied most men quickly, but Elder Lee continued his grueling schedule day after day. One morning while touring the Andes Mission, he and his party arose at 5 a.m., traveled several hours, held a long conference, and in the evening attended a dinner and reception in his honor that lasted until 11 p.m. Mission President J. Vernon Sharp thought surely the apostle would want to wait until morning to hold the delayed missionary meeting. But not Elder Lee. The meeting convened at that late hour and Elder Lee offered the closing prayer at 1 a.m. the next morning!

The press release concerning Elder Lee's trip was mostly favorable, with the exception of two large Chilean newspapers which carried caricatures of Elder Lee as "Marrying Sam," referring to the Church's belief in polygamy. The picture was captioned, "Mormon leader arrives in Chile to organize missionary work in Chile. We asked where his other wives were, but he said he only brought one."[56]

The tour included one event of particular

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[56]J. Vernon Sharp, oral interview, June 10, 1970, Typescript, p. 49.

significance, lending fulfillment to the declaration that the gospel would be taken "unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers." It occurred when Elder Lee visited Dr. Martin R. Echegoyan, the President of Uruguay. In a letter to the First Presidency, Mission President Arthur M. Jensen described the October 2, 1959 visit:

> Although his visit was scheduled to be but a brief formal call, it developed into a moving experience for all those present which lasted far beyond the designated time limit. Throughout the visit a spirit of rapport was evident between Elder Lee and Dr. Echegoyan, which soon extended itself to include everyone present. Among other remarks made by Dr. Echegoyan were these significant sentences. "I know about you and your history and we have much in common. You and I are kindred spirits for we both started out as teachers. I also know about your church and I am glad to have members of your church in my country. Some say North Americans are interested only in money, but I know they are kind and generous, especially those of your church. You observe Sunday and use the rest of the week to serve your fellow men. Yours is not just a Sunday religion." There was an unusual spirit present during the ensuing conversation, and after an interval Elder Lee turned to Dr. Echegoyan and said, "I feel moved to give you a blessing." Those who were there testified that the words spoken by Elder Lee penetrated their innermost beings. . . . Elder Lee blessed Dr. Echegoyan with the health and the strength to carry on the great work he was doing in Uruguay. Then he blessed the country and its inhabitants. Dr. Echegoyan again sent his personal thanks and kindest wishes to Elder Lee and expressed his delight with the visit.[57]

A few weeks later Elder Lee sent a leather bound copy of the Book of Mormon to Dr. Echegoyan which bore his autograph. President Jensen felt that as a result of the visit, the mission received the friendship and goodwill of

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[57]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," October 2, 1959.

Dr. Echegoyan.[58] The First Presidency, impressed with the significance of the visit, read President Jensen's entire letter to the Quorum of the Twelve.

Also of significance during Elder Lee's tour was a manifestation of the gift of tongues during a talk by Elder Lee to 1,300 people attending a district conference in Montivideo, Uruguay on October 4, 1959. The Spanish speaking members understood Elder Lee as he was talking and declared they did not need the interpreter.[59] Elder Lee remarked, "I was so certain that they knew the English language for they nodded their heads approvingly during my talk even before the translation was rendered."[60] The outpouring of the gift of tongues manifest on this occasion was repeated at other times during the visit of General Authorities.

In late 1960 President Joseph Fielding Smith toured the five missions with Elder A. Theodore Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy. The trip was a prelude to Elder Tuttle's assignment the next year as president of all the South American missions.[61] Sister Smith, who

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[58]Mrs. Arthur M. Jensen, oral interview, February 10, 1975, Salt Lake City.

[59]Deseret News, Church News, [Salt Lake City], November 21, 1959, p. 4.

[60]Deseret News, Church News, [Salt Lake City], October 31, 1959, p. 5.

[61]"Journal of A. Theodore Tuttle," October 24, 1960. Located at Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

accompanied her husband, endeared herself to the missionaries by entertaining them with her beautiful singing and impromptu talent programs.

In Brazil, the mayors of Joinville and Ponta Grossa attended the district conference sessions at which President Smith spoke, marking the first time that Brazilian city officials had attended Church conferences.[62] This indicated the favorable attitude of most Brazilian government officials toward the Church.

Time magazine even reported on President Smith's visit in Brazil and mentioned that "267 missionaries have 30,000 converts and expect to baptize 2,000 in the next six months in Brazil."[63]

Traveling conditions in Brazil during President Smith's trip were typical of those in these developing nations. When heavy rain forced cancellation of a conference in one area in Brazil, President Smith and his party found it impossible for their plane to take off from a muddy field at Porto Uniao, Brazil. They were forced to return to the main city, Curitiba, by bus over quagmire roads. Several times during the nearly twelve hour bus trip it was necessary for Elder Tuttle and Brazilian Mission President Asael T. Sorenson, to take off their shoes, roll

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[62]Deseret News, Church News, [Salt Lake City], December 3, 1960, p. 6.

[63]Time, p. 77.

up their trousers, and help push the bus out of the mud. The Church News of December 3, 1960, carried a picture of the Smiths and President Tuttle contentedly walking barefooted through the Brazilian mud along side their floundering bus.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson was visiting South America at this same time in his official capacity as Secretary of Agriculture in the Eisenhower Cabinet. When he and President Smith met at the airport in Brazil, it was the first time two apostles had been on the South American continent at one time.[64] Elder Benson used whatever free time he had to counsel with mission leaders and speak to gatherings of saints and missionaries.[65]

The visits by General Authorities during this fifteen year period were invaluable in creating favorable publicity for the Church and building faith in the hearts of members. They gave increased motivation to thousands of missionaries and the counsel and direction of these authorities to the mission presidents shaped policies that prepared South America for future growth. Brazilian Mission President Sorenson commented:

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[64]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," October 24, 1960.

[65]"Manuscript History of the Andes Mission," November 1, 1960. Elder Benson also visited South America in 1955. Conference Report, April, 1955, p. 47-49.

> We learned that the Lord speaks through these men to his mission presidents, to the members . . . that really is the mind and will of the Lord when these men come through a mission and they speak under the inspiration of the Lord. . . . When we put into effect the things which they had counseled us to do the mission would just move up another notch or two notches and we would grow and develop . . . the Lord then magnifies the work we're engaged in and it grows and develops and expands.[66]

Of these first six members of the Quorum of the Twelve who visited South America between 1945 and 1960, three of them later became presidents of the Church and two others were called as counselors in the First Presidency. It was a great blessing to have men leading the Church who had first-hand knowledge of South America.

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[66]Sorenson interview, p. 70.

## Chapter 5

## THE ROOTS SINK DEEP

Proselyting in South America did not always follow the traditional pattern of door to door tracting to find contacts. A variety of approaches was employed to attract the interest of the people to the gospel message and negate the effects of anti-Mormon publicity. In Argentina two elders were called to form a Book of Mormon lecture team that traveled throughout the country giving both secular and religiously oriented slide presentations on the Book of Mormon. At other times the work was introduced by presenting fifteen minute programs over public address systems, using Book of Mormon themes and playing Tabernacle Choir records.[1]

In Brazil, "Valley of Triumph" and "Crimson Cliffs," films about Utah, were shown to create interest in the Church and its beliefs.[2] Handbills were used in other areas of Brazil to advertize public meetings. These emphasized questions that many non-members had, such as:

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[1]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," January 16, 1949; also February 16, 1949.

[2]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," January 1, 1953.

> Who are the Mormons? Have you wondered? When was Christ here in the Americas? What is the Book of Mormon? What is the history of the ancient American Indian? Why are you here on the earth? Where did you come from? Where will you go after leaving this life?[3]

In Argentina a puppet show was used successfully to create interest. It was shown in five cities to over 1,800 investigators,[4] most of whom were children. Many of these children began attending Primary which was also frequently used as a missionary tool. One mission president commented on its success:

> Primary is one of the best missionary tools we have in this country. A number of fine young people now taking prominent part in the mission were brought into the Church through this organization and many parents have been converted to the Church through the activities of their children in Primary.[5]

Street meetings were found to be effective in some areas, especially in towns where there was a main plaza or square. During the summer these squares were always full of people. In Brazil the street meetings usually began with one elder speaking while the others were out in the crowd making contacts and distributing literature.

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[3]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian South Mission," January, 1960.

[4]The Improvement Era, LI (January, 1948), 48.

[5]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February 23, 1952.

Two future stake presidents and one bishop were converted as the result of one of these Brazilian street meetings. They all three were ministers and converted many of the members of their congregations.[6]

The elders generally tried to visit mayors and other city officials, especially when opening new areas of the work. They would explain what they were doing and explain about the Church. This eliminated prejudice, suspicion, and worry in the minds of city officials and most of them were favorably impressed with the young missionaries.[7] One set of elders in Londrina, Brazil got a cool reception, however, from the mayor when they turned down a cup of coffee. They explained the Word of Wisdom to him, but he felt if this rule became widespread it could have a very damaging effect on the area's coffee industry.[8]

Mormon musical groups did much to help the South Americans learn about the Church. Some of these groups became quite popular and performed on radio and television and even before national presidents and other high government officials.[9] They often sang at service clubs,

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[6]Asael T. Sorenson, oral interview, July 12, 1972, Salt Lake City, p. 59.

[7]Sorenson interview, p. 7.

[8]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," February 27, 1956.

[9]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," March 27, 1951.

hospitals, and schools. Generally they were made up of missionaries, who tried to combine a gospel message with their music. Occasionally, after missionaries' appearances, people would express interest in learning more about the Church, but the pricipal effect of these entertainment programs was to aid the tracting missionary as he knocked on the doors of non-members who now had at least heard of the Mormons.

In 1951, the Argentine Mission organized a chorus of fifty-five voices. After several appearances throughout the country, they were invited to sing on radio for half an hour on Christmas eve, prior to the national president's annual holiday address to the nation.[10] This chorus included not only missionaries but members, and also some non-members, among whom several baptisms resulted. The choir director, Ronald V. Stone, commented:

> On every occasion the group was surprised at the music that was rendered. The Lord will continue in the future to guide us if we can keep the correct spirit and play and sing for the furthering of the Lord's work here in the earth. This is the key to making the most beautiful music in the world.[11]

These choruses were so popular with the non-members that when President McKay visited South America in 1954, John Candeau, a leading South American newspaper

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[10]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," December, 1951.

[11]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," December, 1951. Elder Stone later became president of the Argentina North Mission.

editor, told him,

> One thing I know is that your people sing very well--and not just religious songs. I've heard the programs and choral presentations on radio and they are very fine. Many people would like to be Mormons only from having heard your choruses sing.[12]

Just as music helped advance proselyting, so did Mormon sports. Church sponsored sports clubs were active in Uruguay and Argentina especially, and participated in and sponsored athletic competition.[13] The members raised funds and built facilities for their "Club Deseret" or Mormon Club.

The Mormon missionary basketball and baseball teams often became nationally famous. In 1956 the Uruguayan missionay softball team won its fourth straight national championship.[14] That same year the mission sponsored a basketball tournament and invited successful non-member teams from the entire country. These efforts, which were greatly publicized, helped give the Church a "young, vital image which appealed to middle class people and tempered the natural Catholic fostered prejudice."[15]

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[12]A. Theodore Tuttle, "South America . . . Land of Prophecy and Promise," The Improvement Era, LXVI (May, 1963) 370.

[13]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," December 12, 1954.

[14]Deseret News, Church News, [Salt Lake City], August 25, 1956, p. 7.

[15]Michael B. Smurthwaite, "Socio-Political Factors Affecting the Growth of the Mormon Church in Argentina Since 1925," (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1968), p. 44.

At the same time it exposed many non members to the teachings of the Church, for tracts were generally passed out at half time while Mormon music groups entertained. Leading newspapers carried headline articles on the games, and often the games would be broadcast over the national radio network.[16] Sometimes as many as 2,000 people attended the games.[17] In addition to the good publicity, fine contacts were often made among members of the opposing teams.

On one occasion in Argentina, the elders were invited to stage a program and a basketball game in the luxurious gymnasium of the Club Gimnacia y Esgrima of Buenos Aires, the largest athletic club in South America, which was celebrating the anniversary of its founding.[18] The LDS chorus was very well received by the crowd; they sang three numbers at half time. Elder Leland Wakefield thrilled the audience with several numbers on the piano, and later, in the dining room, he was again requested to perform and was encored several times. The purpose of Mormon missionary work was announced at various

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[16]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," January 1, 1956.

[17]L. Sidney Shreeve, oral interview, January 9, 1975, Provo, Utah.

[18]The Improvement Era, LI (January, 1948), 48.

times over the public address system by the announcer and the Church was put in a favorable light.[19]

Thus Mormon sports teams, combined with LDS music groups, played before thousands of people in exhibition, tournament, and benefit games.[20] The teams did not win all of their games for, according to the record, one Argentine missionary team "gained more friends than points."[21] Uruguayan mission president Fredrick S. Williams felt that more friends were made when they lost than when they won anyway.

In 1955 the BYU basketball team visited Brazil and played various clubs, making a favorable impression among the people. It was reported "a strange thing to see a whole group of young men at public dinners partaking of neither coffee nor tea nor tobacco nor alcoholic drinks."[22] At half time during each of their games a missionary spoke to the crowd assembled, explaining the Mormon way of life.

When the University of Utah basketball team

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[19]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," November 11, 1947.

[20]Deseret News, Church News, /Salt Lake City7, January 3, 1948; also "Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," November 11, 1947.

[21]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," May 5, 1950.

[22]Tuttle, Era, p. 373.

visited Brazil, though not Church sponsored, they created good publicity for the Church, as they were mostly Latter-day Saints. The Brazilian mission president afterward reported concerning the team's visit that "from the Church's aspect, this is one of the greatest things to happen to bring the Church to the mind of countless Brazilians."[23] These sports events did much to make the Church better known and put it in a more positive light.

Another technique used by the elders to further the work in South America was to teach English classes and give cultural lectures, turning their North American background to advantage. The Church and its teachings found a way into these presentations and often the group became more interested in religion than language. One class in Uruguay eventually told the elders, "Make up your mind whether you want to teach religion or English, let us know, we are not interested in English." These classes were often a very effective proselyting tool, especially in reaching upper middle class and professional people.

The Anderson plan for teaching the gospel was generally followed in these missions, which was an organized plan for instruction consisting of several lessons on basic Church doctrines, which lead toward membership in

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[23]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," November 9, 1949.

the Church.[24] The members were encouraged to do their part in the missionary effort and to seek referrals. The Argentine mission presidency in a letter dated January 4, 1951, urged all members to take personal responsibility to help at least one person reach conversion during the year. Elder Henry D. Moyle had also counseled the South American Saints to convert one person a year.[25]

Member proselyting programs were developed and many local members were called to serve a type of stake mission. In La Plate, Argentina, six local missionaries were called and within four months had tracted more than one hundred hours and attended one hundred cottage meetings.[26] The members helped the missionary effort also by assuming many branch positions, which left the elders with more time to contact people and preach the gospel.

One of the deterents to proselyting in South America was found to be the absence of a large middle class in that society. Elder Stephen L. Richards recognized this fact when he reported in General Conference in

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[24]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," December 8, 1949.

[25]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," June, 1956; also January 4, 1951.

[26]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," March 22, 1949.

1948:

> Everywhere there is conspicuously lacking that strong middle class which is the back bone of our own and other progressive countries. It takes humility and intelligence to understand and receive the restored gospel. The aristocracy lack the humility, and the poor and destitute often lack in good measure the intelligence.[27]

Thus the elders were encouraged to work with the educated people and those in vital places whose influence could aid them in spreading the gospel.[28] They were instructed to labor particularly with men and families.[29] Elder Richards continued:

> I thought I could see in the disposition, customs and practices of these South Americans some of the reasons which have impeded gospel work among them. They are suspicious and distrustful. All this has a bearing on our missionary work. Homes are not easily accessible . . . we do no country work. Our missionaries visit no farm homes, so productive of investigators and converts in other countries.[30]

Missionary work was centered in the cities where branches of the Church were already established and where transportation and communication were less of a problem.

The proselyting approach was positive. Missionaries refrained from all attack on the prevailing church

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[27]Stephen L. Richards, Conference Report, October, 1948, p. 146.

[28]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," July 10, 1950.

[29]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," May 4, 1947.

[30]Richards, Conference Report, p. 146.

and instead used imaginative proselyting methods to bring in a steady flow of converts and attract attention which planted seeds that would ripen in future growth. The last five years of the fifties saw just the beginning of the growth that would soon take place in South America. In Argentina, baptisms per year increased 600 percent during this period and in Brazil, where there had never been over one hundred baptisms in a single year until 1955, 1,400 converts were made in 1960. The Uruguayan Mission baptized 750 in 1960.[31]

As the numbers of members and missions in South America grew, local members were given more and more of the responsibilities of leadership. The constant transfer of missionary personnel had always been a problem in the branches where the elders were in leadership positions.[32] The general attitude of most of the mission presidents was, "We were quite sure that the worst member president would in the long run be better than the best missionary president."[33] In time, with well-organized mission auxilliaries

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[31]"Mission Annual Reports," "Mission Monthly Progress Reports," "Mission Membership Statistics and Officers," 1945-1960, in Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

[32]Harold Brown, oral interview, October 4, 1973, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 38.

[33]William Grant Bangerter, oral interview, October 8, 1974, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 26.

and functioning district leadership, the local branch officials obtained help and were able to carry on quite successfully. With the publication of administrative manuals, guidance was given that answered many common problems of the fledging leaders. There had never been a lack of willingness on the members' part to serve, but only a lack of experience and the proper tools to work with.[34]

District conferences began to place greater emphasis on organization and branch work, rather than gospel doctrine.[35] With local leadership established, the Church improved its image and became less of a North American product. Native members benefitted from the opportunities for service, teaching, and leadership. Elder Spencer W. Kimball in 1959 had instructed the mission presidents in South America that the task of the missions was to develop districts to the point where they could be organized into stakes.[36] There seemed to develop a trend toward calling mission presidents who had experience serving in stake presidencies so as to facilitate this preparation for stakehood in Latin America.[37] Progress

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[34]"Mission Annual Report," Argentina, 1951.

[35]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," May 17, 1959.

[36]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," May 17, 1959.

[37]Bangeter interview, p. 2.

was made in this direction in various ways.

A directing council was formed in the Argentine Mission composed of twelve men, much like a high council. They helped bring about better coordination among the auxilliaries, the priesthood, and the mission presidency. In the Andes Mission, a mission elders quorum was organized. Local members were called as counselors in some mission presidencies and the missions began sending out their own full time missionaries. In Uruguay thirty-nine members were called for six months and set apart as part time missionaries to dedicate several hours each week to their calling. At the end of their six months, 90 percent of them requested to serve longer.[38] These missionaries seemed to be especially effective because they had no cultural or language barriers with their contacts. Investigators often found it easier to identify with one of their own countrymen who had been converted from the predominant Latin religion.

A type of welfare program was developed to some extent among the missions. On a farm in Rocha, Uruguay the members built a chicken coop, dug a well, planted 900 trees, and built a house for a caretaker.[39] The welfare program was emphasized greatly in Brazil,

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[38]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," November 28, 1951.

[39]"Mission Annual Report," Uruguay, 1951.

especially during the administration of President Rulon S. Howells.[40] Many food storage items were sold at the Braziliam mission home and homemade bread was occasionally used as an attention getter in tracting, as the elders would explain some of the elements of the LDS welfare program.[41]

During this period the Church began reaping the benefits of the solidarity and experience of second generation Mormons. These members were the future stake presidents, bishops, and regional representatives of the Twelve. During this period their roots began to sink deep into all the aspects of the Church program. All of this helped move the mission districts toward stakehood as had been counselled by Elder Kimball.

The Church building program in South America was not really initiated until the 1960's, although a few chapels had been built. Part of the reason for the hesitancy in chapel building was "the unpreparedness and backwardness and political unrest of these nations which made it impossible to expand and invest and make permanent commitments."[42] Most of the places in which the Saints

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[40]Rulon S. Howells, oral interview, January 18, 1973, Salt Lake City, typescript, p. 58. Howells had been the first mission president in Brazil in 1935.

[41]Sorenson interview, p. 45.

[42]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," 1957.

met were not owned by the Church.[43] When Elder Stephen L. Richards visited, he encouraged the mission presidents to improve their rented buildings. Suitable halls could be built for recreation and conferences, and eventually chapels could be constructed. The building of chapels, Elder Richards said, would depend upon the progress of the work.[44]

Some success was achieved, for six years later President David O. McKay gave permission to the South American leaders to purchase chapel sites in all cities where the number of members warranted it.[45] The first chapel and recreation hall built by the Church was in Montivideo, Uruguay. President McKay laid the cornerstone for the building on January 30, 1954. He said,

> This is a historic occasion. Judging from other missions we have visited you are in a good mission, you are in a great country. . . . What a marvelous demonstration of the missionary work in this mission that has been opened only six years.[46]

All three members of the First Presidency had been in

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[43]"Mission Annual Report," Brazil, 1948. The missionaries shared in paying the rent on these branch buildings since they used them as living quarters.

[44]"Mission Annual Report," Brazil, February 27, 1948.

[45]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," January 20, 1954.

[46]Tuttle, Era, p. 369.

Montivideo, J. Reuben Clark, Jr. having been there in 1933 to attend a Foreign Ministers Conference at the request of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.[47]

The next year the chapel was dedicated by Elder Mark E. Petersen. It was not the first chapel built by the Church in South America, however, one in Joinville, Brazil, and another in Laneirs, a suburb of Buenos Aires, Argentina, had been erected earlier though neither had included a recreation hall.[48]

This building of chapels had a very beneficial effect upon the members, especially the poor who were not too progressive. "They dressed better for meetings, showed more culture in their behavior, and made an effort to improve their homes."[49] The members devoted much time in helping in the construction of the buildings, but because of their economic circumstances, the saints there were generally required to pay only 10 percent of construction costs.[50]

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[47]Stephen L. Richards visted in 1948 and David O. McKay in 1954.

[48]W. Ernest Young interview, January 8, 1975, Provo, Utah.

[49]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February 6, 1952.

[50]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," November 28, 1951; also "Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," June 30, 1954.

Mission and district conferences of members were especially enjoyed as an opportunity to mingle and renew friendships. The members were able to catch a vision of the magnitude of the work of the Church to which they belonged. Conference time often lasted three days and included a variety of activities in addition to the inspirational conference sessions. There were youth meetings, dances, sports events and tournaments, variety shows, auxillary meetings, priesthood meetings, baptismal services, banquets, officers and teachers meetings, and plays.[51] Such activities gave the members of the small isolated branches the opportunity to see that the Church was much larger than the four walls of their chapel.

Many non-members were attracted to the activities. Huge crowds of 600 and 700 often attended the dances and games. Leaders were cautioned, however, that they "should always be sure that the effort and cost do not exceed the benefits to be obtained."[52] The conventions were greatly anticipated events which united the members and built their faith in the gospel. Eventually they were discontinued though, mainly because of the expense involved.

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[51] Deseret News, Church News, [Salt Lake City], March 17, 1947.

[52] Spencer W. Kimball, "Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," March 17, 1959.

The missionaries generally assisted in planning and carrying forth these conventions, though the mission presidents were counseled by Spencer W. Kimball that "if the sacrifice of missionary time and effort becomes too great, the project is not worth the cost."[53] There were many joyous reunions as missionaries renewed acquaintances with converts they had taught and members with whom they had labored. These were sometimes sad occasions as well, because it was difficult to "say good-bye to the elders who brought the gospel to them because, they feel it is the last time they will ever see them in this life."[54] Unfortunately this was most often the case.

Mission magazines in Argentina and Brazil helped to unite the members and also served as proselyting tools. The Argentine Mission's El Mensajero Deseret (The Deseret Messenger) began in 1937 as a missionary newsletter. When it expanded to include the Uruguayan Mission in 1947, it had become a more impressive publication which included translated articles from The Improvement Era, The Relief Society Magazine, The Children's Friend, and The Instructor. It also carried addresses from General Conference and excerpts from books written by General Authorities. Local news from the missions was included,

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[53]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," March 17, 1959.

[54]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," March 27, 1951.

with articles and editorials by the two mission presidents. Campaigns were carried on periodically to boost the circulation of the magaine.[55]

In 1955 El Mensajero Deseret was replaced by a magazine published in Salt Lake City for all of the Spanish speaking missions. It was known as the Liahona and had been published for some years in the Mexican missions. It was now adopted by all of the Spanish speaking missions. The Liahona was edited by Gordon B. Hinckley, of the Church's Mission Committee, and Eduardo Balderas, the Church Spanish translation expert. The magazine was printed in Mexico and served the Mexican, Central American, and Spanish American missions in addition to the Argentine and Uruguayan missions.[56]

The Liahona followed the same lines as El Mensajero Deseret, with an editorial by President McKay and features from the Improvement Era, including "Answers to Gospel Questions" by Joseph Fielding Smith. There were reports on the progress of the missions with pictures of their various activities and leaders. Included were flannel board stories and cut-outs, poetry from Spanish members, and usually an editorial reprinted from the Church News.

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55 El Mensajero Deseret, [Buenos Aires], various issues between 1945 and 1955.

56 Liahona, [Mexico City], various issues between 1955 and 1960.

Some Church books were serialized in the Liahona. In previous years the members of the Church had been under the necessity of cirulating typed or handwritten copies of translated books and articles, and though there was still a dearth of translated Church books, the magazine helped alleviate the problem to a great degree.[57] The Brazilians had even fewer translated Church books than the Spanish Saints. Elder Mark E. Petersen reported in 1955 that they had "little supporting literature for the Standard Works."[58] The Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price had been published in Portuguese in 1950 and 1952 respectively, but the mission needed more literature, even though they had a monthly magazine entitled A Liahona.[59] It followed the same format as the Spanish Liahona.[60] A Liahona had been preceded by a monthly entitled Gaviota, meaning seagull. This newsletter was printed in both Portuguese and German, since a great many of the early South American converts were German immigrants. During and after World War II, however, the use of German was prohibited in Brazil.

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[57]Conference Report, October, 1946, pp. 69-70.

[58]Mark E. Petersen to the First Presidency, Spring, 1955.

[59]"Mission Annual Report," Brazil, 1949 and 1952.

[60]Brazilian Mission, box #2, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Many of the needs for Church literature by the Saints in South America were fulfilled by the Church magazines, but it was the desire of the Church leaders to make available more reading and teaching material. It was felt that this would help the South Americans feel closer to the general Church leadership, receive the benefit of their counsel, and learn the gospel better.

## Chapter 6

## STORMCLOUDS

In bringing the gospel to South America, many problems were encountered that had little to do with religion. Most were a result of the lack of advancement among Latin American nations and their governments. This was especially true of communications. Mail was often slow in coming, lost en route, torn open, and occasionally, during revolutions or when post office workers went on strike, it was burned.[1]

It was not unusual to have to wait two or three years to have a telephone installed and then the service was poor and calls often did not go through.[2] Communications between the United States and South America were so poor that when President George Albert Smith died in 1951, President Williams of the Uruguayan Mission did not learn of it until four days later when he read of it in an English newspaper sent from Buenos Aires.[3]

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[1]W. Ernest Young, oral interview, February 23, 1973, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 103.

[2]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," January 7, 1954.

[3]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," April 27, 1951.

Many services taken for granted in North America were difficult to obtain and often poorly rendered. Mission President Harold Brown in Argentina tried for over a year to get a repairman to fix the mission home furnace or install a new one. Finally he fixed it himself.[4]

Bringing an automobile into the country was a long, drawn out process involving one or two years of red tape and waiting, plus payment of customs, taxes, and storage.[5] The same was true of household appliances and furniture. When the first Uruguayan mission president moved to South America in 1947, his family spent six months "camping out" pending the arrival of their goods and their clearing customs.[6] Packages from the United States sent to missionaries were a problem because of the time and expense involved in getting them out of customs. The duty often exceeded the value of the package.

The red tape involved in coming into the countries was also hard to endure. In 1948 Stephen L. Richards arrived in Buenos Aires at 7:00 in the morning, but it was 2 p.m. before he got through customs, passport inspection,

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[4]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," July 25, 1950.

[5]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," November 28, 1951.

[6]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," January, 1948.

baggage check, and medical review.[7] He remarked, "Everybody takes his time about doing things, the government and its agencies especially. The sooner you learn this the happier you are."[8]

After William W. Seegmiller was released as president of the Brazilian Mission in 1945, he reported in General Conference:

> When I was set apart for my mission, President Clark said: "Now, Brother Seegmiller, cultivate patience." And in a few moments he said again: "Do not forget to be patient." And after a line or two he said: "Please remember, Brother Seegmiller, with all your kindly disposition, you must cultivate patience." I did not realize fully what that meant until I became better acquainted with Latin America, and oh how I needed patience! I have now come from the "land of tomorrow," I hope with more patience, because every time I tried to get anybody to do anything, they said amanha [tomorrow].[9]

The rigid, time consuming application of multitudinous regulations became especially exasperating in a tragic circumstance that occurred in March, 1952. Elder Lorin Hancock, serving in Chubut, an outlying area of Argentina, was burned severely when a kitchen gas tank exploded. He was taken to a doctor to have his

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[7]Young interview, January 8, 1975.

[8]Stephen L. Richards, Conference Report, October, 1948, pp. 146-151.

[9]W. W. Seegmiller, Conference Report, October, 1945, p. 147.

wounds dressed, and later to a small hospital thirty miles distant. This facility was inadequate so the doctors and elders decided to fly him to Buenos Aires. The elders had no success in getting Elder Hancock on the only plane out of town because none of the passengers would give up their seats.[10] The mission president in Buenos Aires sent an air taxi for him which departed late, had weather trouble, and was unable to land in the small town. Too much time had been lost, and the injured elder passed away before the plane finally arrived.[11]

Sadly, his companions took the body on board the plane for the return flight to Buenos Aires. Again there was trouble as the plane was unable to take off from the small town, about half way to Buenos Aires. The elders decided to try to have the body embalmed there, but discovered that an embalming had never been performed in the village. Generally in Argentina bodies are buried within twenty four hours after death, so no embalming is done. Two doctors who had had some experience embalming attempted to embalm the body as best they could.

The next day, after further delay enroute, the plane reached Buenos Aires. The body was taken to the

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[10]Harold Brown to Mr. and Mrs. Lester Hancock, April 2, 1952, Argentina Mission, box 1.

[11]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," March 22, 1952.

British Hospital, where it was kept, though at some legal risk to the hospital. Fortunately there was an elder serving in the mission who was an expert mortician, and finding the embalming job poorly done, was able to save the situation.

The mission president, Harold Brown, initiated the legal negotiations necessary to send the elder's body home, only to find that the authorities in Buenos Aires would not accept the signature of the local officials in Chubut, who had signed papers on the elder's death and removal from that place. This discovery led to a mad entaglement of red tape with communications, back and forth to Chubut. After a delay of almost two weeks, Elder Hancock's body was finally flown home to the United States.[12]

A tragic situation such as this made it hard not to have bitter feelings, although the mission president explained in a letter to the elder's parents that "insofar as saving his life was concerned, they did everything there which could have been done anywhere."[13]

The missionaries were told that they should not look down on the people because of their slowness and inefficiency, and they had been counselled by President

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[12]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February 23, 1958.

[13]Harold Brown to Mr. and Mrs. Lester Hancock.

David O. McKay "not to find fault with the government or customs . . . and to speak well of the country."[14]

Some of the religious customs and manners of the people made the work of the missionaries difficult and interferred with its progress. On Holy Days, the workers and children were obliged to march in the national parades and thus had to miss their own church meetings.[15] During national elections, which were usually held on Sundays, no church meetings were allowed. Meetings were impossible during revolutions and political upheavals, and hard to hold during the traditionally wild "carnival" week.

Some of the saints lived in extremely simple and even primitive conditions. In the rustic interior settlement of Isla Patruna, Uruguay, the mission president visited, to attend a baptismal service. A dead cow had to be removed from the stream before the converts could be immersed, and with great consternation, one of the visitors noticed two deadly snakes in the grass near the place of baptism.[16] Several South American church members lived on the very frontiers of their countries.

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[14]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February 3, 1954.

[15]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," November, 1954.

[16]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," April 30, 1950.

All of the annoyances in communication, services, transportation and living conditions were frustrating to those striving to carry on the work of the Lord, but in spite of this, the Church continued to roll forward rapidly.

Annoyance of a different kind was experienced when the predominant South American church sought to thwart the program of the elders. Elder Harold B. Lee told a group of the Brazilian elders that "persecution is an evidence of a threat to Satan's power."[17] This threat was met in various ways by the groups who sought to hinder the advancement of the Church.

A Catholic magazine in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, for example, carried the following in its April, 1956 edition:

> It is with great heaviness that every hour we receive news of a sect of fanatics that installed themselves a short time ago in the center of our parish. And though they attempt with their religious extravagance to establish a new church, I supplicate the Virgin of the Good Journey that she confound and remove these haughty fanatics that come distilling the venom of this heresy in the middle of our tranquil parish.[18]

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[17]"Diary of William Grant Bangeter," September 18, 1959. Bangeter was president of the Brazilian Mission and later became a General Authority. James E. Faust, another General Authority, had been a missionary in Brazil also.

[18]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," May 10, 1956.

The Catholic Vicar had written this under the headline, "Free Us Lord From the Heresies."

Such vitriolic attacks from Catholic Church leaders came because of resentment they felt against the introduction of Mormon missionaries into their "tranquil parrish." Throughout the years they wrote and preached words of warning to their congregations. The people were constantly cautioned in church magazines, in sermons from the pulpit, in house to house canvasses, radio broadcasts, and even in public address announcements. The message was occasionally graphic and specific. Loud speakers from the Catholic Church in Recife, Brazil announced:

> All know who they are; one tall, with glasses and one with a dark suit. It is said that they are well educated, have good manners, and speak Portuguese clearly and effectively, having a magic influence on those who hear. We hope that these two boys exit from our neighborhood as soon as possible.[19]

Another Catholic parrish bulletin, published this article, belittling the sacrifice of Mormon elders and their work:

> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints placed itself more in the United States as a financial enterprize than a religion. Men of adventurous age leave for missions, not in places of uncivilized savages, but in the great cities. It is an easy heroism to leave the United States and spend two or three years in Brazil, Argentina, or France, becoming acquainted with new countries and new customs, always locating in cities with at least some comfort. They make love, suggesting to

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[19]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," April 30, 1960.

> many unsuspecting young girls the possibility of marriage. To others they provide scholarship for study in the most beautiful place on earth, the valley of the Mormons in North America.[20]

Though smaller in number, even the Protestants, on occasion, demeaned the Church and its missionaries. One Protestant bulletin reported the following:

> Unlike true missionaries who sweat and slave in the jungles among the pagans expending the best years of their lives under caustic suns, through dangerous rivers, and forest, without food and sleep, enduring at least a thousand difficulties in carrying the bread of life to hungry souls, they gather from another's field, coming in sheep's clothes, playing a word game with the Bible, and putting Prophet Smith's book above the word of God. Joseph Smith was a descendant of beggars and epileptics. Instead of teaching the gospel directly as did Jesus Christ, they lull the people in with English classes and dances, after their religious services. In summary, they teach the rejection of the Bible as the only law of faith and practice baptism for the dead. They sanction polygamy and affirm that certain gifts are still in force that ceased with the termination of the apostolic era.[21]

It is perhaps understandable that the Catholic clergy would be upset at this instrusion of foreign elders, especially as they saw their people being converted to this new religion. In Paraguay, the Catholic priests forbade their people to accept Mormon tracts or talk to the missionaries or even to walk in front of the elders on the sidewalk. They were, of course, forbidden

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[20]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," September 11, 1955.

[21]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," July 22, 1955.

to attend LDS services.[22] In Lajes, Brazil, where a Mormon conference was publicly advertised, this warning appeared in a Catholic newspaper, written by the Diocese Secretariat of the Faith:

> We remind once again all faithful Catholics that under no pretext is it proper for you to be present in meetings where heresies are propagated. He who directs himself to a meeting where open or clever heresies are propagated, even if only for the sake of curiosity, commits just as grave a sin. There are three reasons that prohibit the merely passive attendance at the conference of heretics: first, the danger of perverting yourself; second, cooperation in the propagation of heresies. To attend the meeting of heretics is equal in the eyes of the public to giving your consent to the errors they disseminate, also the presence of all those attending, serves to encourage the heretics in their work of disseminating heresies. Any cooperation in wickedness is always sinful. Third, scandalizing of your neighbor, by scandal is meant the induction of others to sin. Those who show up at the meeting scheduled by the LDS or Mormons aren't worthy of the name Catholic.[23]

Worn out anti-Mormon propaganda was used as leaders of the prevailing church attempted to discredit what was to them an evil institution bent on taking their congregations away and perverting the minds of their people. They asserted that Solomon Mack, grandfather of the Prophet, was sickly and,

> his [Joseph Smith's] father created sorceries and his mother was subject to hallucinations, hearing supernatural voices, and seeing luminous faces.

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[22]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," April 30, 1950.

[23]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian South Mission," February 13, 1960.

> Joseph Smith would have for certain inherited something. Their prophet leader was hanged for having been accused of rebellion against the state.[24]

Mission President William Grant Bangeter commented,

> While I was mission president a few of these things came to light, and our instruction generally was that the missionaries should take these articles and search out the man who was responsible and speak to him frankly and say, "We don't particularly enjoy your publishing things against the church but we want to tell you that if you persist in it and desire to do it you're at liberty to go right ahead, because it really helps us more than it hurts us.[25]

This was invariably the case.

In order to combat the introduction of Mormonism, Catholic Action groups came alive with some success. Weekly LDS radio programs were being broadcast in the Argentine city of Rosario, but after a barrage of letters from a Catholic action group, the government radio station informed the elders that they would not be able to continue their programs in the future. An elders' quartet which had sung forty-five times on the radio suffered the same fate.[26] In Mendoza, Argentina, the Tabernacle Choir broadcasts were heard until the government ordered that no non-Catholic religious organizations could transmit

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[24]"Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission," June 16, 1954.

[25]William Grant Bangeter interview, October 8, 1974, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 4.

[26]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," September 24, 1948.

on the air. An active Catholic group on Cordoba, "the Rome of Argentina," put up a quonset hut near the branch building where a successful primary was being held; then they canvassed the neighborhood and presented an attractive program the day of primary. They organized the neighborhood mothers into a group to raise funds to make the hut permanent.[27] After Catholic priests staged a house to house campaign in Rio Cuarto, Argentina, preaching against the Mormon meetings,[28] three primaries of 140 children were reduced to one primary of fourteen children.

Action groups also sponsored evening youth classes to run competition with MIA, and others started English classes much like the elders had been holding. Undaunted, the elders predicted that "in a few weeks all will be back to normal, as it has never been long after such affairs that the [people] forget."[29] Most South Americans were not active in the Catholic Church, but it was so much a part of their national life that it was considered unpatriotic to join another church.[30]

Church meetings were sometimes stopped by the

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[27]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," October 22, 1948.

[28]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," June 30, 1948.

[29]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," June 30, 1948.

[30]Harold Brown, oral interview, October 4, 1973, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 14.

police on trumped up charges obviously the work of the Catholic Church.[31] Sometimes the subtle Catholic persecution had a reverse effect and actually provided an impetus to the work. Mission President Fredrick S. Williams in Uruguay, wrote the First Presidency a long letter in 1948 describing the Catholic persecution and how it actually helped their work. He said, "We have noticed that in every town where the Catholic Church has actively worked against us we have had the most success."[32] In one instance in Uruguay, he said the Catholics accused the elders of having Communist leanings. A radio station manager who was a friend of the elders became outraged. For the next five days he gave free publicity on the radio to the elders and their up-coming MIA opening social. He broadcast:

> These two young men are here on a religious mission teaching religious truths. Both defended the freedom of the world in the last war. Each Uruguayan should go and hear what they have to say. Next Saturday they are having the opening social for their Mutual organization. You fathers and mothers should let your young people attend this meetings; better still go and take them with you.[33]

Fifty-five people attended the meeting in the small hall with many more outside trying to get in.

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[31]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," May 23, 1949.

[32]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," August 27, 1949.

[33]"Manuscript History of the Uruguayan Mission," February, 1948.

When Brazilian Mission President A. T. Sorenson was asked if he thought the Church's efforts were hindered by negative publicity and articles, he replied: "This created a curious interest in the minds of a lot of people so that they wanted to come in and see what we had."[34] Thus many came to join the Church because of propaganda that was supposed to drive them away from it.

The Mormons were such a tiny minority that it is unusual that they should have received any attention at all from the Catholics. One mission president counselled his missionaries:

> Most of the Catholic church don't even know we're here. They don't even care. There are more catholics born in San Paulo everyday than we'll baptize this year . . . don't get excited about how much they hate us, because most of them don't even know or care."[35]

Some Catholic opposition was quite subtle. In Argentina, for example, the Church had trouble in obtaining passports and visas for the missionaries even as early as 1946. Some government officials admitted that the problem stemmed from pressure by the Catholic hierarchy, and a lawyer hired by the Church to work on the problem confirmed that assumption. When the Secretary of Foreign

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[34]Asael T. Sorenson, oral interview, July 12, 1972, Salt Lake City, Typescript, p. 100.

[35]Bangeter interview, October 8, 1974, p. 15.

Affairs was visited by the Argentine mission president in 1946, their interview was not cordial. The secretary accused the Church of teaching things "contrary to the precepts of his country."[36] For this reason the government was slow to grant visas and when visas were granted they were often just three or six-month tourist visas and required the elders to go out of the country to renew them, since the emigration department refused renewals when applied for within the country. This was all very expensive and time consuming and slowed their work. Occasionally even elders leaving the country were detained five and six days waiting in line to get their passports.[37]

In September 1946, twenty-nine elders were sent in a group to Argentina and were not permitted to enter until March, 1947. They spent months waiting in Brazil, but due to high prices, bad living conditions, and the poor health of several of the missionaries, the mission president had them transferred to Montivideo, Uruguay. They took rooms in a small hotel and set up a study schedule and started having church meetings with a member family

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[36]Michael B. Smurthwaite, "Socio-Political Factors Affecting the Growth of the Mormon Church in Argentina Since 1925," (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1968), p. 78.

[37]Harold Brown, "The Mormon Church in a Catholic Country Under Political Dictatorship," graduate history paper, Brigham Young University Special Collections Library, p. 19.

living there. Several of the elders were thin and suffering from stomach trouble.[38]

Though Mission President W. Ernest Young made repeated appeals to the Immigration Office, his papers were always "conveniently misplaced."[39] Day after day for over two months he spent hours in lines pushing the papers from office to office, but to no avail. He blamed the trouble on the Catholic Church and complained, "I couldn't do regular missionary work. I was fighting problems instead of doing missionary work."[40] He said that his time was not completely wasted as he was able to do some proselyting work with the employees of the Immigration Office while he stood hours in line.[41]

For six months the elders waited before finally obtaining tourist visas. The large number of elders applying for entrance into the country had frightened the Argentine officials. After that elders were sent in smaller groups and experienced less trouble.[42] Changing the word "missionary" to "church representative" on the passports

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[38]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," March 8, 1947.

[39]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," March 8, 1947.

[40]Young interview.

[41]Young interview.

[42]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," March 8, 1947.

also helped the elders get processed more rapidly.[43] In 1953, when Peron's government and the Catholic Church were having such dissention, visas started coming more rapidly. In the other missions of South America visas were hardly a problem at all. When Asael T. Sorenson went to Brazil as mission president in 1953, he used the same visa issued him as a young missionary entering Brazil thirteen years previously.[44]

Occasionally missionaries were put in jail for one excuse or another, though the governments officially stood for complete freedom of religion. The governor of the Brazilian state of Santa Catarina had a very favorable attitude toward the Mormons though, and told President Sorenson,

> Here's a number you can call anytime day or night and we'll have your missionaries out immediately. We don't want that to happen because the Brazilian constitution gives the people religious freedom.[45]

In the spring of 1949, the Argentine government Ministry of Exterior Relations and Worship sent out an order to all police to the effect that Harold Brown, the mission president, had arrived in Argentina,

> to increase the missionary activity of the Mormon Church, and since said church in various ways preaches polygamy and disturbs the peace of the great Catholic family, Harold Brown is to be

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[44]Sorenson interview.

[45]Sorenson interview, p. 69.

> deprived of the right to organize meetings and dictate conferences.[46]

There were other complaints too.

> We were accused of selling books for profit, entering the country on tourist visas, and then working for wages: they claimed that we were subsidized by a foreign power.[47]

The accusations plainly indicated gross misunderstandings of the Church and its practices. The first results were felt in Mendoza, Argentina, where the elders were denied a request to hold a special meeting. Appearing before the general secretary of the police department, the elders were told that since the Church was not nationally registered, and under Harold Brown's direction "worked in a manner destructuve to the Catholic family," the Mormons were not to be given any cooperation or granted any requests.[48] The Arroyito and Cordoba, Argentina branches were told they could hold no more meetings until the Church was registered with the government.[49] The Church had been trying to have itself registered for

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[46]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," July 30, 1949.

[47]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," July 30, 1949.

[48]Mark Cannon, "The Closing and Opening of Mormon Chapels by the Police in Argentina," graduate religion paper, Brigham Young University Special Collections Library.

[49]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," September 11, 1949.

months, but officials were dragging their feet. In Santa Fe, Argentina, the police informed the elders they could hold no more meetings at which Harold Brown was the speaker. When President Brown later came to Santa Fe to speak, he was summoned to the police station and told he "would suffer all consequences" if he went forward with the meeting. The meeting was cancelled.[50]

Subsequent to this, at the Buenos Aires police headquarters, President Brown was placed under arrest and detained for a vague charge amounting to "entering the country without permission."[51] He was told that he would be deported. That night the American ambassador found out where he was being held and had him released. The Argentine officials said it was all a terrible mistake and gave the weak excuse that they had him confused with a deserter from the Jamacian Army![52]

After the police threatened to close down more branches, President Brown wrote the American Embassy protesting the discrimination against the Church. He asked that they clarify his right to hold meetings, and find out the reason for the delay in granting the Church registration. He also requested that missionary visas be granted

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[50]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," September 3, 1949.

[51]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," September 9, 1949.

[52]Brown interview, p. 31.

for periods of two and a half years.[53] Soon thereafter an article came out in La Tribuna, a large Buenos Aires newspaper, strongly defending the Mormon position and expressing indignation at the closing of some of the branches.[54] This and other related events applied pressure in the right places, and finally after more than a year all meetings and activities were resumed.

When answering a question about his achievements as mission president, Elder Brown made this response:

> A very significant accomplishment, I think was survival. This situation was very precarious and I literally lived with butterflies in my stomach for three years. And I think that what we refrained from doing had more to do with our survival than what we actually did. In other words, the inspiration that was sought and received was more along the line of what to avoid. I think that we could have gotten outselves closed down, as a mission many many times. And so literally speaking, I think one of the important accomplishments during that period was to survive.[55]

Over the years the Argentine government vacillated from pro-Catholic to almost anti-Catholic positions. Just prior to Juan Peron's overthrow in Argentina in 1955, his government accused the Catholic Church of using its pulpits to preach against the government. He put an end to

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[53]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," September 27, 1949.

[54]La Tribuna, [Buenos Aires], December 21, 1949, located in "Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," 1949.

[55]Brown interview, p. 47. Brown's wife was the niece of Fredrick S. Williams, former Argentine mission president.

the compulsory teaching of Catholicism in the public schools, allowed divorce, stopped the government subsidy paid to the Catholic clergy and schools, and passed a decree allowing all religions the same rights as the Catholics in administering to their members in hospitals, prisons, etc.[56] There was a definite effort by the government to establish complete equality of religion. The Congress even passed a bill to call a constitutional assembly to amend the constitution and desestablish the Roman Catholic Church from its position as the official religion of the state.[57] All of these moves seemed to aid the missionary in his endeavor to get into the homes and present the gospel message. It was also during this period, that President McKay had his very cordial visit with Argentine President Peron.

These developments were quite a favorable although only temporary turnabout for the Church, which usually suffered during times of political unrest, with the elders not being able to proselyte and often suffering for lack of communications, telephones, and transportation. More often than not, North Americans were blamed as being at

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[56]Lee Valentine to Lee Richards, March 30, 1955, Argentine Mission, box 1, Church Historian's Office.

[57]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," February 13, 1955.

the bottom of political troubles, which put the elders in a less favorable position. Sometimes they were forced to stay in their apartments and cancel meetings because of possible danger to them from radical political elements. The people generally were undisturbed though by political turmoil. In Brazil there was a

> feeling that it didn't matter much what the government did. The people didn't seem to adjust their lives vitally to changes in the government. . . . As far as their interest in the missionaries and in the message of the gospel, we had a very even time of it.[58]

The members of the Church usually were involved very little in these political events, though they were counselled by Elder Henry D. Moyle,

> to take an interest and participate in government That's not left to the /Catholic/ priests. That's our responsibility . . . we don't even want anyone to represent us in politics, we want to represent ourselves.[59]

He went on to state,

> How much better it would have been if when the nations of Latin America declared their political independence from Spain, if they had also gained their freedom from the religious bondage which Spain had forced upon them.[60]

In spite of these various problems, the Church flourished and a solid foundation was laid upon which further expansion could rest.

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[58]Bangeter interview, October 1, 1974, p. 18.

[59]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," May 28, 1955.

[60]"Manuscript History of the Argentine Mission," May 28, 1955.

## Chapter 7

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In 1946, when Fredrick S. Williams approached President George Albert Smith with the idea of expanding missionary work in South America, he had in mind the small republic of Uruguay. This friendly, democratic country, which had never been opened to missionary work, was soon to be the scene of great progress and many conversions to the Church. There was rapid acceptance of the gospel in a short time. Just four years after the opening of the Uruguayan Mission in 1947, President David O. McKay declared that since the founding of the British Mission in 1837, no mission of the Church had progressed so rapidly as the Uruguayan.[1] During three of its first four years this mission had more convert baptisms than the Argentine and Brazilian missions combined.

The opening of the mission was facilitated by the friendly attitude of the Uruguayan government leaders. This had developed mainly because of returned missionaries who worked for the Uruguayan and United States' governments in Montivideo. These faithful men created a good

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[1]Fredrick S. Williams, taped message to the Uruguayan Mission Reunion held in Salt Lake City, Utah, Spring 1972.

feeling toward the Church among many high government officials in Uruguay by their examplary living.

The sister nation of Paraguay was opened shortly thereafter. This area, which came to be part of the Uruguayan Mission, was less productive of converts, though it did grow steadily.

In the Andes Mission of Peru and Chile the Lamanite work began in earnest and added vigorous dimensions to the South American proselyting. This huge area which had previously been included in the Argentina and Uruguayan Missions, was organized into a mission by Elder Harold B. Lee in 1959. Many providential events took place in the initial years of this mission. The tragic earthquake in Chile in 1960 brought the Church to the attention of many Chileans, including most of the government leaders. In Peru, the native Incans began to receive the Book of Mormon, the record of their ancestors. At the organization of the Andes Mission Elder Harold B. Lee noted that in the countries of Peru and Chile, twice as many converts per missionary had been made and in half the time as in the two parent missions, Argentina and Uruguay.

Brazil, which had shown marked growth in the late 1950's was divided into two missions in 1959, the Brazilian South and the Brazilian. This massive nation of millions began to show perhaps the greatest promise of all the South American missions.

The visits of President David O. McKay and Elder

Stephen L. Richards brought a new feeling to the Saints in South America. A feeling of more unity with the world-wide Church of Jesus Christ and new insight into and appreciation for living prophets was gained. Faith was stirred by the testimonies and messages given by these two prophets. Elder Mark E. Petersen came in 1954 and helped the missions "tighten the ship." Henry D. Moyle uttered prophecies concerning the future of the work there and helped to open two new mission areas in 1956 when he visited. Elder Spencer W. Kimball, who came in 1959, set a pace directed toward greatly increased proselyting effort. He also gave directions for stakehood preparations. Harold B. Lee's tour was marked by an impressive visit with the President of Uruguay and the opening of two new missions, including the first predominantly Lamanite mission area in South America. Joseph Fielding Smith and A. Theodore Tuttle who came the next year, 1960, preceeded the opening of the South American Mission in 1961 with Elder Tuttle as its president.

These visits created favorable publicity for the Church and left behind newly motivated and inspired missionaries and members. The General Authorities' visits had a great influence in guiding the destiny of the Church in South America as they gave counsel and set policies that helped give proper direction to the growing movement.

Mormon music and sports groups helped the Church become better known and tempered some of the anti-Mormon prejudice in South America. There was a great variety of imaginative proselyting techniques used from puppet shows to street meetings, from outdoor displays to motion pictures.[2] Toward the close of the 1950's there began to be a great increase in convert baptisms as proselyting became more and more effective. In his April, 1959 General Conference address, Elder Spencer W. Kimball said that twenty-four years were required to convert the first thousand people in South America, eight years to baptize the second thousand, and one and a half years for the third thousand.[3]

During the War the local members in South America had carried on quite well even without missionaries and during the fifteen years following, made great strides toward stakehood and developed in leadership and spirituality. They soon presided over a great many branches. Church building was stepped up, district conferences emphasized training and leadership, and good Church literature and magazines became readily available.

The work suffered some from communication and

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[2]Other Mormon missionary techniques are described in Prudencia Damboriena, El Protestantismo en America Latina, (Bogota, Columbia: Sociales de Feres, 1962), p. 137.

[3]Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, April, 1959.

transportation problems, government red tape and political upheavals, and a general inefficiency in services. Patience was enjoined by Church leaders and the work carried on. The Catholics carried on campaigns to strenghten their members against the Mormons, but generally these efforts had little effect on the work.

More subtle persecution was felt when passport and visa problems arose for the Mormon missionary or as in some areas branches were closed for a time and various Church publicity programs were curtailed because of pressure from the prevailing church. In some instances though these difficulties actually helped move the work forward. Elder Mark E. Petersen, in a letter to the First Presidency in 1955, referred to the attempts of the Catholic Church to stop the work as helpful.

> The more they have opposed our elders, the more advertizing they have given us and the greater the curiosity which has been arising in the minds of the people. This has led to many investigators and has helped our work a great deal.[4]

One of the reasons for the growth in South America after the Second World War was a change in attitude brought about by war and its changes in living conditions. Proselyting found new impetus as South Americans' attitudes were found to be more liberal and less traditional. As

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[4]Elder Mark E. Petersen to the First Presidency of the LDS Church, Spring, 1955, LDS Church Historian's Office, Argentina Mission, box 1.

education increased and the standard of living was improved, the people became more receptive to new ideas and more amenable to change. The varied and progressive proselyting methods introduced at this time helped the Church increase, as did the direction given by the visiting General Authorities.

This history bears witness that God is at the helm and guides righteous men and women as instruments in his hands in bringing to pass his purpose and the fulfillment of his prophecies, for he has said:

> Verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated. . . .
>
> And the voice of warning shall be unto all people by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.
>
> And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them.[5]

His warning has gone forth in South America as a seed planted in fertile ground and has now grown to great proportions. The work has followed the course prophecied by Elder Melvin J. Ballard when he said in 1925:

> 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. . . . The South American mission will be a power in the Church.[6]

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[5]The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), 1:2, 4-5.

[6]Ballard Family, Melvin J. Ballard, Crusader for Righteousness (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 93.

## APPENDIX A

### A CHRONOLOGY OF THE CHURCH IN SOUTH AMERICA 1945-1960

| | |
|---|---|
| 1945 | Harold Rex replaces W. W. Seegmiller as mission president in Brazil. |
| 1947 | Uruguayan Mission organized with Fredrick S. Williams as president. |
| 1948 | Elder Stephen L. Richards tours South American missions. |
| 1949 | Rulon Howells replaces Harold Rex as mission president in Brazil. |
| | Harold Brown replaces W. Ernest Young as mission president in Argentina. |
| 1951 | Lyman Shreeve replaces Fredrick S. Williams in Uruguay. |
| 1952 | Lee B. Valentine replaces Harold Brown in Argentina. |
| 1953 | Asael T. Soresenson replaces Rulon Howells in Brazil. |
| 1954 | President David O. McKay tours South American missions. |
| | Elder Mark E. Petersen tours missions. |
| 1955 | Frank Perry replaces Lyman Shreeve in Uruguay. |
| 1956 | Elder Henry D. Moyle tours missions. |
| | Lorin Pace replaced Lee B. Valentine in Argentina. |
| 1958 | Arthur Jensen replaces Frank Perry in Uruguay. |
| | Grant Bangeter replaces Asael T. Sorenson in Brazil. |
| 1959 | Elder Spencer W. Kimball tours missions. |
| | South Brazilian Mission organized by Elder Harold B. Lee with Asael T. Sorenson as president and Andes Mission organized with James Vernon Sharp as president. |
| 1960 | C. Laird Snelgrove replaces Lorin Pace in Argentina. |
| | President Joseph Fielding Smith and Elder A. Theodore Tuttle tour missions. |
| | J. Thomas Fyans replaces Arthur Jensen in Uruguay. |

## APPENDIX B

## SOUTH AMERICAN CHURCH STATISTICS 1945-1960

| YEAR | NUMBER OF MISSIONARIES | NUMBER OF CONVERTS |
|---|---|---|
| 1945 | 5 | 32 |
| 1946 | 42 | 37 |
| 1947 | 159 | 51 |
| 1948 | 219 | 204 |
| 1949 | 211 | 379 |
| 1950 | 236 | 330 |
| 1951 | 242 | 208 |
| 1952 | 188 | 250 |
| 1953 | 161 | 219 |
| 1954 | 237 | 253 |
| 1955 | 328 | 362 |
| 1956 | 337 | 844 |
| 1957 | 353 | 1,417 |
| 1958 | 400 | 1,472 |
| 1959 | 431 | 1,573 |
| 1960 | 665 | 2,849 |

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# THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN SOUTH AMERICA 1945-1960

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## ABSTRACT

The history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in South America between 1945 and 1960 shows growth in numbers of members and strength of those members. The Church grew more than 1000 percent during those fifteen years and almost half of all South American branches came under the direction of local, native leadership. The three new missions organized were evidence of the growth being made. Church building was stepped up and Church literature in Spanish and Portuguese became plentiful.

Some problems encountered were opposition of the prevailing church, misunderstandings with government, and the inefficiency of transportation and services. Visits of General Authorities inspired members and missionaries and gave direction to the work, and new and inovative proselyting techniques were employed, such as sports and music programs, which helped the work flourish. Lamanite areas in South America that were opened were found to be among the most receptive to the gospel message.

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