

Church Growth and Lamanite Involvement

SPENCER W. KIMBALL

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is a special privilege to be here today in Indian Week and see this large body of Indian students before me. As you know, I have been closely affiliated with the Indian program since its inception this last time. I've given so many talks here on morals I thought maybe something else might be a little interesting to you today, and would like to tell you a little bit about the growth of the great Church—the church to which you belong.

A Kingdom to Stand Forever

The growth of the Church is phenomenal. It relates to the Indians, to all the Lamanites, and to all the people of the world, for it has become a great and world church, when only yesterday it was a Utah church. About the time in history when the Lehiters came to America, Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. And the great monarch had a dream, with which “his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him” (Dan. 2:1). It seems that the magicians and the astrologers were brought before the king to reveal the dream and its interpretation. They asked him to relate his dream, but he said, “The thing is gone from me.” Great rewards were promised these specialists, but they could not recall the dream.

At this juncture, Daniel, who already had a reputation for spiritual powers, was called to the court of the king. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel said, “But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets. . . . As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter” (Dan. 2:28–29). Here's the dream:

Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. . . . This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

Thou sawest . . . a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet. . . .

Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, . . . and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. [Dan. 2:31–35]

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This was an amazing accomplishment, obtained through the revelations of the Lord. Daniel continued:

Thou, O king, . . .

. . . art this head of gold. . . .

And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron. . . .

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver. . . . [Dan. 2:37–40, 44]

Now, this remarkable vision of Nebuchadnezzar, now about 2,500 years old, portrayed the history of the world for many generations. And then Daniel concluded that when Cyrus had conquered Babylon, and Alexander had conquered Cyrus, and the Medes and Persians and the Romans had taken the place of the Macedonian Empire, and the Roman Empire had broken up into many nations in Europe, the great day of the dream would come; and Daniel was inspired to say that—quite unlike the perishable, temporary empires which crumbled, one after another—the God of heaven would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed, and it would stand forever.

This stone, cut out of the mountain, is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is the kingdom of God. It is the work of pure revelation—started small, but grown big. It was organized with six members in 1830 and has grown now to over three million. It is permanent; it will never be destroyed. And Daniel concluded his story by saying, “And the dream

is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure” (Dan. 2:45).

The Early Growth of the Church

The Church grows internally by its births and externally by its baptisms and conversions. The Prophet Joseph Smith began missionary work before the Church was organized, and revealed to John and Peter Whitmer that “the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me” (D&C 15:6; 16:6). Nothing is more important than missionary service. And so the missionary work has continued ever since, with some interruptions when wars disturbed it. It must be remembered that the mission is the mother of the stake, and that the purpose of the organization of the Saints within the mission is to develop them to the point where they can be independent stake organizations. It is interesting to note that the Kirtland, Ohio, Stake was organized, the first stake in the world, in February 1834 and was disorganized four years later. And not until 1958 did Ohio have another stake. The Clay-Caldwell Stake in Missouri, organized in 1834, was disorganized in 1846, and Missouri waited a full century for another stake to come in. It seems there must have been something about a curse placed upon states that were unkind to the people of God. The Adam-ondi-Ahman Stake was organized in 1838. These years have all passed, and there still is no stake in Nauvoo. There are signs of spring, however; the buds are bursting, and we now have a restoration program in Nauvoo, an imposing visitor’s center, a small branch of the Church, and a corps of missionaries. But they’re still waiting for the day of redemption.

The Chicago Stake came ninety-seven years after the expulsion of the people from Chicago’s stake, Illinois. The Iowa, or Zarahemla, Stake was organized in 1839 and was disorganized about two years later. Iowa had no stake again for 124 years. It was Cedar Rapids. The Crooked

Creek-Ramas Stake in Illinois was organized in 1840 and disorganized a year and a half later. Lima Stake in Hancock County, Illinois, was organized in 1840. We now have a Lima Stake, thousands of miles south in Peru. The Quincy Stake was organized in 1840. The Mount Hope Stake lasted only seven months. The Freedom Stake, the Geneva Stake, and the Springfield Stakes were organized in 1840. All these stakes of yesteryear have never come back.

What a setback. When Satan takes over, progress stops and rigor mortis sets in. The fourth stake in the West, and the first in California, was San Bernardino. It lasted seven years. It was to wait seventy-eight years before another stake would be organized in San Bernardino. However, California began its rapid rise when the Los Angeles Stake was organized in 1923 and Hollywood and San Francisco stakes in 1927. And now California has eighty-three stakes.

The first stake to be organized in the West was Salt Lake Stake in 1847. They celebrated about two weeks ago their 125th anniversary, or their 500th stake conference. It was just two months after the Saints arrived in Salt Lake Valley; apparently it was the only stake in the Church for four years. And then they began coming rather rapidly. There came Weber Stake in Ogden, and then the Provo Stake, which is called now the Utah Stake. Then Parowan and Nephi and Millard and Beaver and Bear Lake and St. George and others, in quick succession.

Nevada began its stakes with Carson Valley in 1856, for two years of life—probably brought to an end by the Johnston's Army episode.

When President Joseph Fielding Smith was born, there were in all the world only twenty stakes. Forty-seven years had passed since the Church was organized, and all of the stakes were then in Utah. In 1878, it began to jump borders and found itself in Arizona, with the Little Colorado Stake and the Eastern Arizona Stake. There came soon the Maricopa Stake, in which Elder Stapley grew up. It was fifteen

years old when he was born. And a St. Joseph Stake, named for the Prophet Joseph. This stake was born the same year as Brother Hugh B. Brown. It was my stake, the one in which I grew up, in which I was stake clerk about twenty years, where I was second counselor in the stake presidency for twelve years. The Little Colorado Stake became the St. John's Stake. The Snowflake Stake succeeded the Eastern Arizona Stake. Elder LeGrand Richards was one year old at this time.

By 1893 the Church had jumped the Colorado boundaries with San Luis, where many polygamists had moved for protection. The Church also moved into Idaho and organized the Bannock Stake, and later the Fremont Stake, Rexburg, Oneida, Cassia, Malad, and the first stake in Wyoming was Star Valley.

The year I was born, the Church crossed the border into Canada. Shortly later, President Nathan Eldon Tanner came into the world. It crossed the border south into old Mexico also, and the Juarez Stake came, also generally to accommodate the polygamists. President Marion G. Romney was born shortly after the stake was started.

The Twentieth Century

At the turn of the century, when President Lee was an infant in Clifton, Idaho, and Elder Benson was born in Whitney, nearby, apparently there were forty stakes in the Church, twenty-five of them in Utah. It was now becoming an intermountain church. In the first decade of this century, twenty-one stakes were organized, an average of two a year, most of them in Utah. These were good years also for leadership, since Elders Richard L. Evans and Howard W. Hunter began their earthly work, to culminate in the Council of the Twelve.

In the second decade, twenty came into existence. This was also a good decade, producing Gordon B. Hinckley of the Twelve. In the third decade, twenty-six stakes were organized. Two more of the apostles came into the

world, Elder Packer and Elder Monson. A hundred years had passed since the Church was organized, and eighty-three years since the exodus to Utah. There were now 102 stakes and thirty missions and 672,000 people, mostly in the Far West. It was largely a western Church at this time. This was one stake per year for the century.

The decade of the 1930s saw the Church population growing fast in California and on the west coast. Only six of the twenty-five stakes were in Utah that decade. But the Church was now moving to new areas: New York, Chicago, Seattle, Portland, and Honolulu. I remember these all very well; they have come in just the last few years, as you know.

The 1940s were profitable years, and some forty-eight stakes were organized, or about four or five per year. Washington, D.C., Florida, South Carolina were favored. It is of special interest to me that the 146th stake, the Ben Lomond Stake, was the first that I assisted in organizing, after having assisted President Lee in the reorganization of my own stake, Mount Graham. Elder John A. Widtsoe and I made Ben Lomond from the old Ogden Stake in 1943. It is noted now that with stakes from Seattle to Florida and from New York to San Diego the bulk of the Church population was still in the United States. We almost dared not dream of the Church crossing oceans at that time.

The decade of the fifties saw a strengthening of the stakes in North America. Though California outdid itself with thirty stakes, Utah had forty that decade. And this was sixty percent of the growth. Two unusual events came at this time: the crossing of the equator into the Southern Hemisphere, with Auckland, was only fourteen years ago, the first stake across the ocean; and the creation of student stakes at BYU and USU gave a new color to the picture.

The last twelve years, the 1960s and the two years of the 1970s, were spectacular growth years in both stakes and missions. Two hundred and fifty-four stakes were organized in

the twelve years, or twenty-one per year—more in one year than were organized in seventy years of the nineteenth century. In 1970 alone, we organized forty-one stakes, one every week—which is more than the total stakes in the whole world at the beginning of the century—sixty-three percent in Utah and thirty-seven percent in the rest of the world. So Utah is still the center of Mormondom. It will be noted that Utah still grows, in spite of the limitation in area and population.

A Worldwide Church

This was the period of expanding to a world church status. With the organization of many new missions and numerous stakes abroad, the Church truly became international and took on world stature. Daniel must have looked down and been very proud of the little stone that was cut out of the mountains and now was rolling forth till it would fill the whole earth. And as you hear these statistics, you'll see that the mountain stone will cover the whole earth, and it almost has already. The stone without hands, which rose into many areas across the seas and extends now from Tokyo Stake to the Transvaal in South Africa, and from Perth in Western Australia to Alaska, and from Scotland to Buenos Aires. There are now four stakes in Tonga, nine in Britain, eight in Australia, six in Mexico, five in Samoa, five in Germany, seven in New Zealand, eight or ten in South America, and stakes in many large cities of the world. I said eight or ten in South America because I think one or two were organized last Sunday and I haven't yet been advised.

There are now about thirty stakes in Lamanite countries. Well, that was unthought of when we first started working with the Indians just a few years ago. This is the day of the Lamanite, and they are receiving the gospel with great eagerness. Percentagewise, they are increasing more rapidly than the

non-Lamanites—Mexico, Central America, South America, the islands of the sea.

About the time of my birth there were thirty-seven stakes in the whole Church, and now there are twice that many overseas—just overseas—and almost that many that are Lamanite, all or in large measure. How do you think Samuel the Lamanite must feel, to look down and see thirty stakes of Lamanites in the islands, and so on? How do you think he would feel to see Lamanites conducting the meetings at the pulpit, doing the singing, playing the piano, and organizing and carrying forward the work of the Lord?

Just twelve years ago, in 1960, it was my privilege to organize four stakes in Australia and New Zealand, including the Hawkes Bay Stake, which was all Lamanite—the first in the world—and now we've got enough almost to organize a stake right here in this congregation. It shows how the little stone, rolling through the whole world, will fill the world, as it's already begun to do. Then the Hawkes Bay Stake consisted of all Lamanites but two: the president was an American; one of the high councilors came from Britain. All the others were Lamanites.

We return again to Daniel's prediction: the small stone becoming the great mountain and filling the earth, including the Orient, continental Europe, Great Britain, South Africa, South America, Central America, Mexico, Alaska, Hawaii, the South Pacific. The growth of the Church, I say, is phenomenal, and nothing can stop it; and, as Daniel said, it will never be destroyed or given to another people. It's here to stay until the end of time.

When the Church jumped the oceans—and the plains and the mountains and the equator—language training became necessary. Accordingly, we have now three language training schools: at Provo, Ricks College, and the Church College of Hawaii. And we're training in many languages and teaching the gospel in nineteen, I believe.

Mosiah said: "The time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (Mosiah 15:28). And Joseph Smith must be smiling too, remembering a revelation he received in 1833: "Every man shall hear the fullness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language" (D&C 90:11). We must learn languages. We are a linguist people, having been teaching the gospel for many years in many tongues.

Now it's evident that we must use other media than tracting. And the Lord has provided us these tools. He's given to us the radio, the television, the transistor, the newspaper, the magazine, the airplane, and worldwide transportation. The total communication, and the world has become one great community.

Back to South America. I met one day a young Peruvian, way back in the hinterlands of Peru, beyond the trains and beyond the bus lines, where we had to go in a car, and he said to me, "I think I heard you the other day on my transistor." He was in Peru; I was in Salt Lake City, in the general conference. But he heard my talk, which had been broadcast, I think, to the Telstar, and then to Buenos Aires, and then back to Lima, and then out into the wilderness. From this remote settlement, about as far away as you could get, he had heard, through this little pocket instrument, some of the general conference; and I realized that transistor radios would come smaller and smaller and would cost less and less money, until the people behind the curtains would hear it, and everybody in the world, nearly, could afford one of these little transistor radios, which would be pocket size.

We ask the stake presidencies and bishops to encourage you young people to retain the languages after you've been abroad, for there will be need for people to write scripts, to act in plays, to write articles, to broadcast, to interpret, to teach, and to serve in all the languages of the world.

From *Time* magazine I clipped an article two or three years ago, and I would quote a few paragraphs from it:

In terms of human lives, one of the most revolutionary inventions in this age of communication is the transistor radio. In much the same way that printing opened up vast new possibilities to the fifteenth-century Europe, the transistor is letting in the world to hundreds of millions still isolated from the twentieth century by geography, poverty, and exploitation. Transistors sway from the long necks of plodding camels deep in Saudi desert and from the horns of oxen plowing the furrows in Costa Rica. A visitor to an Ecuadorian lingua, in which the Indians come together for communal road building, calculated that at least one tiny transistor radio was sounding every twenty yards along the two-mile road. The cheapness and portability of the transistor set has given the medium a new mobility and a new dimension. For Peru's twelve million inhabitants, there are more than 800 radio stations, and radio reaches the ears of virtually every man, woman, and child in the country. In Guatemala six times as many people listen to radio as read newspapers. Black Africa, which had fewer than four hundred thousand radios in 1955, has at least six million today. In rice field or rain forest, compound or croft, the mere possession of a transistor radio confers status on its owner, who has, perhaps, gone hungry to make his down payment and worked a little harder to keep the installments up.

The work of the Lord has grown. The missionary work has gone forward with increasing vigor. The hundredth stake was Lehi in just 1929, and it took the Church ninety-eight years to get the first hundred stakes. The two hundredth stake was East Ogden, 1952; it took only twenty-four years to make that second hundred. The three hundredth stake was Toronto, and it took only eight years to create that hundred. Medford, Oregon, was the four hundredth stake, and it took only four years to make this group. Fallon, Nevada, was the five

hundredth stake. The six hundredth stake is yet to be organized, but Rio de Janeiro was organized two weeks ago to make 589.

Our Responsibility to Teach

Now comes the responsibility to teach the gospel to the world, with all the media and the facilities available. The Lord has said many times, "Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, in his own tongue and in his own language." We have a great responsibility. Every normal Latter-day Saint boy, including every Indian boy, should grow up saving his money, and building himself, and perfecting himself, so that when he is of proper age he will fill a mission. And with the tremendously rich promises to the Lamanites, every Indian boy should be about the most eager of all to go. Some young women may go. We could send forty thousand today instead of sixteen thousand if we were really converted as a total people to this program.

In war, in spite of the tanks, the big guns, the explosives, and the planes, they must always have the infantry to do the cleaning up. The missionary work is a little like that. We'll always need missionaries to do the personalized teaching and to do the baptisms and organization, even though the mass media may bring millions of people to know the gospel and to believe it. If other countries would provide missionaries in sufficient numbers to supply their own needs, there could be released immediately seventy-five hundred missionaries from the United States who are now serving in those countries that haven't caught the vision yet of their missionary service. It is possible that our very lassitude and casualness could be the reason we have not expanded farther. And I am positive that when we are prepared with missionaries the Lord will open up new fields for us, fields that now are closed.

Most of the missionaries could supply most of the funds for their missions if they would. Many have spent their money for cars and for

motorcycles and for skiing equipment and for a lot of other things, whereas if the mission were their obsession they could take care of much of their own costs. In overseas countries, where the economy is distressed, the same process of financing should be followed. But there we have also the First Presidency's fund and the First Council of the Seventy's fund to supplement where it is necessary. Frequently a prospect can get employment and save his money until he has a reasonable amount. Let me tell you of one young man in the central West I interviewed for a mission. I asked him about his finances; he said, "Oh, the elders quorum is going to take care of it."

And I said, "Oh, no, the elders quorum isn't going to take care of it. Who is going to take care of your finances?"

And he said, "Oh, the elders quorum. They said they would."

I said, "No, we send no missionaries totally supported by anyone else. They must make a contribution themselves."

And so I started to go to make my next appointment, and he said, "Wait a minute, Brother Kimball. I've got a collection of guns that are very valuable. And I could get hundreds of dollars for them. I'll sell them." And he said, "I've got some musical instruments. I won't need them while I'm on my mission, and I can sell them. And I can make quite a sizable contribution toward my mission." A few weeks later, I met him in Salt Lake on his way to his mission.

The Day of the Lamanite

The world is awakening to the possibilities and the realm of the gospel. The Lamanites all over this world are seeming to remember something they knew before. There comes to mind an experience of Brother Boyd Packer. We attended a sacrament meeting in a little branch in Cuzco. The chapel was quiet. The opening exercises were finished and the sacrament meeting in preparation. A little Lamanite

ragamuffin entered from the street. Calloused and chappy were the little feet that brought him in the open door, up the aisle, and to the sacrament table. Here was dark and dirty testimony of deprivation, want, and unsatisfied hunger, spiritual as well as physical. Almost unobserved, he slyly came to the sacrament table, and with a seeming spiritual hunger, he leaned against the table and lovingly rubbed his unwashed face against the cool, smooth, white linen. A woman in the front seat, seemingly outraged by the intrusion, caught his eye, and with motion and frown sent the little ragamuffin scampering down the aisle, out into his world, the street. A bit later the little urchin, seemingly compelled by some inner urge, overcame his timidity and came stealthily, cautiously, down the aisle again, fearful, ready to escape if necessary, but impelled as though directed by inaudible voices with a friendly and familiar spirit, and as though memories long and faded were reviving, as though some intangible force were crowding him on to seek something for which he yearned but could not identify. From his seat on the stand, Brother Packer caught his eye, beckoned to him, and stretched out his big welcoming arms. After a moment's hesitation, the little Lamanite ragamuffin was nestled comfortably on his lap, in his arms. The tousled head against the great warm heart, a heart sympathetic to waifs, and especially the Lamanite ones.

Later Elder Packer, with a subdued voice, recalled this incident to me. As he sat forward on his chair, his eyes glistening, emotion in his voice, he said: "As this little one relaxed in my arms, it seemed it was not a single little Lamanite I held; it was a nation. Indeed, a multitude of nations, deprived, hungering souls, wanting something deep, good, and warm they could not explain. A humble people, yearning to revive memories all but faded out, of ancestors standing wide-eyed, open-mouthed, expectant, and excited. A people reaching for truths they seemed to remember

only vaguely, for prophecies which surely would someday be fulfilled, looking up and seeing a holy, glorified being descend from celestial areas, and hearing a voice say, 'Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And in me hath the Father glorified his name. I am the Light and the Life of the world.' "

The day of the Lamanite is surely here, and we are God's instruments in helping to bring to pass the prophecies of renewed vitality, acceptance of the gospel, and resumption to a favored place as a part of God's chosen people.

And now may I conclude with a picture of this Indian woman of Bolivia, painted by Walter S. Miller, and coming from the *Maryknoll* magazine:

There she sits, with many of her tribe, on the rock wall bordering the road from La Paz to the plateau above. Her little brown derby hat is like the hundreds of others along the way. Her eyes are squinting, since the upturned brim on the little hat does not protect them from the glaring sun. Her face, wrinkled, exaggerates her age, and her nose says she's a Lamanite. Her hair wiggles its way out from under the derby in long strings, her lips are cracked and her hands are chapped. The red shawl covers her upper body, and the modest skirt hangs to her feet. She's looking off into space and thinking, thinking deeply. The missionaries have just left. They've been telling her strange and unusual things about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And this is what she's saying to herself:

*For me? You say it was for me
The Son of God came down to earth,
Born just as any Indian babe,
Then, bundled up, was laid upon the hay—
How could it be? How could it be?*

*Where is He now? Does He live far away?
Show me the trail! Please tell me more of Him.
How I should like to see Him! Yet I'm old:
I cannot walk the trails as once I could;
And mountain paths are steep.
So, if I went, I'd have to travel slow.
Would you go with me, if I were to go?*

*"Come unto me!" Those words included me?
He calls for ME? You're SURE He calls for me?
Would He receive ME, if I came to Him?*

*He CARES for me? You say He cares for ME!
Ah, then, I'll come—my heart cries out for Him!
Oh, that I might have known Him long ago,
when I was wee.*

*To think I almost missed Him! And He came
FOR ME!*

[By Walter S. Miller]

God bless the Lamanites, the Lamanite cause, the whole program, and all of you students, and Brigham Young University with all the good it is doing, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.