AFRICA, THE CHURCH IN

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been a presence in Africa since 1853, but for the first 125 years it was established only in southern Africa. Applications by the Church for admittance into central Africa in the 1960s were denied, but those in 1978 were approved, and growth of the Church there has been impressive.

From 1853 until 1978 most of the work of the Church in Africa was with European immigrants and their descendants in South Africa and in Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively). In June 1978, when the First Presidency announced the revelation extending the priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church, the way was opened for the Church to extend its full program to all the nations of Africa (see D&C, Official Declaration—2). Missionaries were sent to Nigeria and Ghana at the request of many local people who had already studied the Church Scriptures and literature and had organized themselves into units that they unofficially called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Church missions were later organized in Zaire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Ivory Coast, and Mauritius and Reunion islands.

The establishment of the Church in Africa began at a special Church conference in Salt Lake City in August 1852, when President Brigham Young called 106 men to leave their wives in charge of their families, homes, farms, and businesses and go on missions to various lands of the world to proclaim the restored Gospel. Three were called to go to South Africa: Jesse Haven, William H. Walker, and Leonard I. Smith, with Elder Haven assigned to preside. Leaving their families in the care of God, they arrived at the Cape of Good Hope on April 18, 1853, and set about to establish the Church in South Africa, encouraging the converts to “gather to Zion” in Utah. The missionaries faced heavy opposition from the local clergy and indifference to their message among the people generally; fewer than 200 people accepted baptism in the two and a half years they served.

One of the first converts in South Africa in 1853 was Nicholas Paul, a thirty-year-old builder who aided and protected missionaries and let them use his home for meetings. He became the presi-

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Africa as of January 1, 1991.

dent of the first branch of the Church in Africa, which was organized in his home in Mowbray (Cape Town area). The 1853 missionaries also organized a branch of the Church in Port Elizabeth. When they returned to their families in America in 1855, other missionaries from America and South Africa were called to replace them. Between 1855 and 1865, 278 converts to the Church emigrated from South Africa to Utah.

No LDS missionaries served in South Africa from 1866 to 1903, and the Church grew slowly. Missionaries returned in 1903 and served until 1940, when they were withdrawn because of World War II. During those years 230 missionaries
Spencer W. Kimball pronounced a dedicatory prayer upon the land of South Africa which included the promise that wards and stakes would dot the land and a temple would be built there. New stakes were created in Durban (1981) and Cape Town (1984). The first black African stake was organized in 1988 in Aba, Nigeria, with David W. Eka as its president.

Church growth in Africa since 1978 has been much higher in percentage than in the rest of the world. The major challenge is no longer to gain converts but to prepare local priesthood leadership. And as the Church continues to expand into sub-Saharan Africa, it must face the challenges of poverty and illiteracy. In addition to contributing to famine relief programs, the Church is helping its members in Africa to learn and implement the principles of self-reliance and independence.

Helen Bassey Davies Udoeyo, Relief Society President of the Eket Branch, knitting, with her scriptures and Relief Society handbook on her lap (1985).

had worked in South Africa. Since the return of LDS missionaries to South Africa in 1944, the Church has grown steadily there and also expanded to other areas of Africa.

In addition to the efforts of foreign missionaries, much of the growth of the Church in Africa has resulted from the service of local members. Johanna Fourie instituted the Primary program for teaching the children in 1932 and spent the rest of her life (thirty-eight years) guiding and building this program throughout South Africa.

In 1954 President David O. McKay became the first General Authority of the Church to visit South Africa. The first LDS Church stake in South Africa was organized in Johannesburg in 1970, with Louis P. Hefer as Stake President. That stake was divided into two stakes in 1978. In 1972 Church seminaries and institutes of religion were introduced into southern Africa. All African countries in which the Church is established now have these programs. The added weekday religious training of the youth has increased local missionary participation. In 1973 President

The Johannesburg South Africa Temple is the first LDS temple in Africa (dedicated 1985). In the dedicatory prayer, President Gordon B. Hinckley prayed for blessings on this nation and that its leaders be inspired "to find a basis for reconciliation" among its people. Courtesy Marjorie Woods.
The Church has always tried to teach the gospel in the language of the people. As Afrikaans is an official language in South Africa, many missionaries sent there have learned to speak it. The book of Mormon was published in Afrikaans in 1973, and the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price in 1981. The Book of Mormon has also been translated into several African languages: Efik (Nigeria, 1983), Kisi (Kenya, 1983), Malagasy (Madagascar, 1986), Akan (Ghana, 1987), Zulu (South Africa, 1978), and Shona (Zimbabwe, 1988).

Local members have helped make these translations possible, such as Priscilla Sampson-Davis, a retired schoolteacher from Cape Coast, Ghana, who translated the Book of Mormon, LDS Hymns, and other Church publications into Akan. Translations into additional African languages continue in process.

One of the most significant events in the history of the Church in Africa was the dedication of the temple in Johannesburg in 1985, which has made it possible for the members to receive locally all the ordinances of the Church and to perform them in proxy for their deceased ancestors. The first temple president and matron of this temple were Harlan W. and Geraldine Morkley Clark. Although the work of the Church in Africa was slow and localized from 1853 until the 1980s, Elder Alexander B. Morrison of the Seventy stated in 1987: "The gleaning and gathering of the children of God in Africa is just beginning. In the words of the Prophet Joseph, it will go forward 'boldly, nobly, and independent, till...[the truth of God has] swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done'" (p. 26).

BIBLIOGRAPHY
AFTERLIFE

[Other articles related to this topic are: Degrees of Glory; Heaven; Hell; Immortality and Eternal Life; Paradise; Plan of Salvation; Salvation; Spirit Prison; Translated Beings.]

Latter-day Saints believe that life continues after the death of the mortal body and that death is but a separation of the physical body and the spirit. The spirits of all individuals, “whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life” (Alma 40:11). President Brigham Young said that the transition from death into the spirit world is “from a state of sorrow, grief, mourning, woe, misery, pain, anguish and disappointment into a state of existence, where I can enjoy life to the fullest extent; ... my spirit is set free; ... I go, I come, I do this, I do that; ... I am full of life, full of vigor, and I enjoy the presence of my heavenly Father” (JD 17:142). The desire, personality, and disposition that individuals develop, shape, and mold in this life will continue into the afterlife.

If individuals are evil in their hearts, their spirits will enter the spirit world intent upon doing evil; if individuals are good and strive to do the things of God, that disposition will also continue, only to a greater degree—learning, increasing, growing in grace and in knowledge of truth (see Brigham Young, JD 7:333). Amulek explained that the “same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world” (Alma 34:34).

Life did not begin at mortal birth, nor will it end at mortal death. God’s gift to all individuals is everlasting life. Every person will die physically; every person will receive a literal resurrection of the body and never die again.

JUNE LEIFSON

AGENCY

“Agency” refers both to the capacity of beings “to act for themselves” (2 Ne. 2:26) and their accountability for those actions. Exercising agency is a spiritual matter (D&C 29:35); it consists in either receiving the enlightenment and commandments that come from God or resisting and rejecting them by yielding to the devil’s temptations (D&C 93:31). Without awareness of alternatives an individual could not choose, and that is why being tempted by evil is as essential to agency as being enticed by the Spirit of God (D&C 29:39). Furthermore, no one is forced to act virtuously or to sin. “The devil could not compel mankind to do evil; all was voluntary. ... God would not exert any compulsory means, and the devil could not” (TPJS, p. 187).

Agency is an essential ingredient of being human, “inherent in the spirit of man” (McKay, p. 366) both in the premortal spirit existence (D&C 29:36) and in mortality. No being can possess sensibility, rationality, and a capacity for happiness without it (2 Ne. 2:11–13, 23; D&C 93:30). Moreover, it is the specific gift by which God made his children in his image and empowered them to grow to become like him through their own progression of choices (J. Snow, JD 20:367). It was because Satan “sought to destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3) that the war was fought in heaven before earth life (cf. Rev. 12:7). What was then, and is now, at stake in the battle to preserve agency is nothing less than the possibility of both the continued existence and the divine destiny of every human being. This principle helps explain the Church’s strong position against political systems and addictive practices that inhibit the free exercise of agency.

Agency is such that men and women not only can choose obedience or rebellion but must (B. Young, JD 13:282). They cannot avoid being both free and responsible for their choices. Individuals capable of acting for themselves cannot remain on neutral ground, abstaining from both receiving and rejecting light from God. To be an agent means both being able to choose and having to choose either “liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator or “captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Ne. 2:27–29; 10:23). A being who is “an agent unto himself” is continually committing to be either an agent and servant of God or an agent and servant of Satan. If