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The Tabernacle Choir sang the number, "How Beautiful Upon the Mountains."

The invocation was offered by Elder Gene R. Cook of the First Quorum of the Seventy and President of the Uruguay Montevideo Mission.

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### President N. Eldon Tanner

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "Lead Me By Thy Light."

Following the singing, Elder

Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve will address us.

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The hymn, "Lead Me By Thy Light," was sung by the Choir.

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### President Tanner

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Marvin J. Ashton, who is also a member of the Council of the Twelve.

## Elder Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren and sisters, I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit. Many of us have been gratified recently as we have read in periodicals and seen on television some complimentary references to the Church.

For instance, last month one of the large circulation magazines spoke appreciatively of the Mormon way of life, a way which discourages the use of tobacco, alcohol, tea, and coffee and encourages physical fitness. Then a network television broadcast reported on our tremendous genealogical program. There have been other positive accounts dealing with the organizational structure of the Church, with our welfare program, and with the family home evening program.

### Joseph Smith

But largely absent from all of these accounts is any mention of the origin of these practices, or the reasons for them.

Further, some recent publications carry the thesis that there is nothing of the hand of Divinity in the establish-

ment and development of the Church; that this has been only a natural response to contemporary social conditions.

An acquaintance said to me one day: "I admire your church very much. I think I could accept everything about it—except Joseph Smith." To which I responded: "That statement is a contradiction. If you accept the revelation, you must accept the revelator."

It is a constantly recurring mystery to me how some people speak with admiration for the Church and its work, while at the same time disdaining him through whom, as a servant of the Lord, came the framework of all that the Church is, of all that it teaches, and of all that it stands for. They would pluck the fruit from the tree while cutting off the root from which it grows.

### Church programs came by revelation

The so-called Mormon code of health, widely praised in these days of cancer and heart research, is in reality a revelation given to Joseph Smith in

1833 as a "Word of Wisdom" from the Lord. (D&C 89:1.) In no conceivable way could it have come of the dietary literature of the time, nor from the mind of the man who announced it. Today, in terms of medical research, it is a miracle, whose observance has saved incalculable suffering and premature death for uncounted tens of thousands.

Genealogical research is suddenly becoming a popular hobby as a result of Alex Haley's book *Roots*. Thousands of eyes across the world have been turned to what is described as the Mormon treasure house of genealogical data. But this tremendous program of the Church did not result from the pursuit of a hobby. It is an extension of the teachings of Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet. He declared that we cannot be saved without our forebears, those who did not have a knowledge of the gospel and consequently could not fulfill its requirements nor partake of its opportunities.

The remarkable organization of the Church, which has received much attention, was framed by him as he was directed by revelation, and no modification or adaptation of that organization is ever considered without searching the revelations set forth by the Prophet.

Even the welfare program, which some are prone to regard as of rather recent origin, is founded and operated strictly upon principles enunciated by Joseph Smith in the early years of the Church. This is likewise true of the family home evening program, which is no more than an extension of early revelation on the responsibility of parents to bring up their children in "light and truth." (D&C 93:40.)

### **Joseph Smith's prophetic calling**

Not long ago, while riding in a plane, I engaged in conversation with a young man who was seated beside me. We moved from one subject to another, and then came to the matter of religion. He said that he had read considerably

about the Mormons, that he had found much to admire in their practices, but that he had a definite prejudice concerning the story of the origin of the Church and particularly Joseph Smith. He was an active member of another organization, and when I asked where he had acquired his information, he indicated that it had come from publications of his church. I asked what company he worked for. He proudly replied that he was a sales representative for IBM. I then asked whether he would think it fair for his customers to learn of the qualities of IBM products from a Xerox representative. He replied with a smile, "I think I get the point of what you're trying to say."

I took from my case a copy of the Doctrine and Covenants and read to him the words of the Lord expressed through Joseph Smith, words which are the source of those practices my friend had come to admire in us while disdaining the man through whom they had come. Before we parted, he agreed to read the literature I would send to him. I promised him that if he would do so prayerfully he would know the truth not only of these doctrines and practices which have interested him, but also of the man through whom they were introduced. I then gave him my testimony of my conviction concerning the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith.

We do not worship the Prophet. We worship God our Eternal Father, and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. But we acknowledge him, we proclaim him, we respect him, we reverence him as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty in restoring to the earth the ancient truths of the divine gospel, together with the priesthood through which the authority of God is exercised in the affairs of his church and for the blessing of his people.

### **Life of Joseph Smith**

The story of Joseph's life is the story of a miracle. He was born in

poverty. He was reared in adversity. He was driven from place to place, falsely accused, and illegally imprisoned. He was murdered at the age of thirty-eight. Yet in the brief space of twenty years preceding his death he accomplished what none other has accomplished in an entire lifetime. He translated and published the Book of Mormon, a volume of 522 pages which has since been retranslated into more than a score of languages and which is accepted by millions across the earth as the word of God. The revelations he received and other writings he produced are likewise scripture to these millions. The total in book pages constitutes the equivalent of almost the entire Old Testament of the Bible, and it all came through one man in the space of a few years.

In this same period he established an organization which for almost a century and a half has withstood every adversity and challenge, and is as effective today in governing a worldwide membership of more than three and a half million as it was 145 years ago in governing a membership of three thousand. There are those doubters who have strained to explain this remarkable organization as the product of the times in which he lived. That organization, I submit, was as peculiar, as unique, and as remarkable then as it is today. It was not a product of the times. It came as a revelation from God.

### **A mighty seer**

Joseph Smith's vision of man's immortal nature reached from an existence before birth to the eternities beyond the grave. He taught that salvation is universal in that all men will become the beneficiaries of the resurrection through the atonement wrought by the Savior. But beyond this gift is the requirement of obedience to the principles of the gospel and the promise of consequent happiness in this life and exaltation in the life to come.

Nor was the gospel he taught

limited in application to those of his own and future generations. The mind of Joseph Smith, tutored by the God of heaven, encompassed all mankind of all generations. Both the living and the dead must have the opportunity to partake of gospel ordinances.

Peter of old declared: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Pet. 4:6.) In the case of the dead there must be vicarious work if they are to be judged according to men in the flesh, and in order to accomplish this they must be identified; hence the great genealogical program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was not established to satisfy the interests of a hobby, but to accomplish the eternal purposes of God.

Within the space of that twenty years preceding his death, Joseph Smith set in motion a program for carrying the gospel to the nations of the earth. I marvel at the boldness with which he moved. Even in the infant days of the Church, in times of dark adversity, men were called to leave homes and families, to cross the sea, to proclaim the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His mind, his vision encompassed the entire earth.

Seated in this hall today are those from North, Central, and South America; from the British Isles and Africa; from the nations of Europe; from the islands and continents of the Pacific; and from the ancient lands of Asia. You who have come from far and near, you are the flowering of the vision of Joseph Smith, the prophet of God. He was indeed a mighty seer, who saw this day and greater days yet to come as the work of the Lord moves over the earth.

### **Thomas Ford**

This magnificent flowering would amaze those men with painted faces

who, in a cowardly attack, shot and killed the defenseless Prophet that sultry June day in 1844. It would amaze Governor Thomas Ford of the state of Illinois, who had pledged to protect the Prophet and then had left him to the mercy of the merciless mob. It was this same Thomas Ford who concluded in his *History* that Joseph Smith "never could succeed in establishing a system of policy which looked to permanent success in the future." (Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois . . .*, quoted in B.H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:347.)

It is this same Thomas Ford who today lies buried in a secluded section of the cemetery in Peoria, Illinois, largely forgotten, while the man he had judged a failure is remembered with gratitude over the earth.

### Testimony and conviction

When I was a boy, twelve years of age, my father took me to a meeting of the priesthood of the stake in which we lived. I sat on the back row while he, as president of the stake, sat on the stand. At the opening of that meeting, the first of its kind I had ever attended, three or four hundred men stood. They were men from varied backgrounds and many vocations, but each had in his heart the same conviction, out of which together they sang these great words:

*Praise to the man who communed with  
Jehovah!  
Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.  
Blessed to open the last dispensation,  
Kings shall extol him, and nations  
revere.  
(Hymns, no. 147.)*

Something happened within me as

I heard those men of faith sing. There came into my boyish heart a knowledge, placed there by the Holy Spirit, that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of the Almighty. In the many years that have since passed, years in which I have read much of his words and works, that knowledge has grown stronger and ever more certain. Mine has been the privilege of bearing witness across this nation from sea to shining sea, and on continents north and south, east and west, that he was and is a prophet of God, a mighty servant and testifier of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Great is his glory and endless his  
priesthood:  
Ever and ever the keys he will hold.  
Faithful and true, he will enter his  
kingdom,  
Crowned in the midst of the prophets of  
old.  
(Hymns, no. 147.)*

That testimony I reaffirm to you this day, as I also affirm that he who presides at this conference is the legal successor to him of whom I have spoken. I know that, and I leave my testimony in the name of him of whom Joseph Smith was a witness and of whom I also am a witness, even the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Bishop H. Burke Peterson, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.