

gions of northern Utah. We express appreciation to all who have spoken tonight, and to those who have sung for us.

Following my closing remarks, the choir will sing "Sweet Is the Work, My God, My King" and Elder Jacob de Jager of the First Quorum of the Seventy will offer the benediction.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, I think I would like first to express my appreciation for your presence, wherever you are gathered, and particularly thanks to the boys, the young men. Those who are in the Tabernacle came here very early and have been seated here now for three hours, in many cases. I know you are a little weary. It will not last much longer.

Report to shareholders

It is customary for an executive officer of an organization to make an annual report to the shareholders. I look upon you brethren as shareholders in this great work of the Lord, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I think I would like to give you a report, as shareholders.

I do so humbly and not in any spirit of boasting or arrogance, with the hope that the Lord will inspire me in that which I say. I do so further because there is an insidious effort going on to try to undermine the Church and destroy its credibility, even among its own members.

I am pleased to tell you that the Church is in good health. Many of you heard the statistical report read this afternoon by Brother Francis Gibbons, secretary to the First Presidency. I should like to mention again some of the figures given by him and make brief comment.

Membership increase and convert baptisms

As of last December 31, the membership of the Church stood at 5,400,000. This represents a gain of

239,000 over the previous year. How wonderful it is to be part of a growing, advancing organization. Some of our critics and enemies challenge us to give the number of those who have left the Church during the year. I assure you that they are relatively few in number. Each time I see such a request I feel sorry for the individual. I wish with all my heart that he or she might have felt otherwise. However, we do not stand in their way. We will labor with them and encourage them to remain. But if they wish to forfeit all of the many marvelous blessings which come of membership in the Church, that is their prerogative. Some few have left, and of those who have left, some have tasted new doctrine. After a short time they have found it unpalatable, and have asked to be permitted to come back. We welcome them.

You may be interested to know that convert baptisms by missionaries dropped some during 1983. We fully expected that this would happen when we reduced the term of service for most missionaries from twenty-four months to eighteen months. This meant a 25 percent reduction in the time of young men serving in the field. I assure you that the drop in convert baptisms has been not nearly that great. All of this indicates that while our young men are serving for a shorter time, they are working more vigorously and effectively.

Share the gospel

At the end of 1983 there were 26,565 missionaries in the field. What a remarkable army of faithful and

devoted servants of the Lord, giving of their time and their means to the advancement of this great work of salvation.

But, as has been said, more are needed, many more, for the field is white and ready for harvest, and the laborers are still relatively few. Every man or woman who goes forth in this service blesses the lives of all he teaches. Furthermore, his or her own life is enriched by this selfless labor. Who has not witnessed the miracle of a missionary who has grown in a wondrous way while engaged in the work of the Master?

Priesthood leaders and fathers and mothers should begin while a boy is very young to point him in the direction of missionary service. Our sacrament meetings should be enriched with the enthusiastic testimonies of those who have returned from the field.

Further, we all need to be reminded to share the gospel with our associates. I emphasize the word *share*. I like it. I deprecate the use of what might be perceived as force and pressure upon those who live among us. I think it unnecessary. Neighborliness, and exemplary living of the gospel of Jesus Christ, with an awareness of opportunity to quietly and graciously lead them in the direction of the Church, will accomplish much more, and will be resisted less and appreciated more by those we seek to help.

Finances and building

I mention financial matters next in my report to you.

The finances of the Church are in sound condition. Because of the tremendous growth of the work across the world the demands upon the tithing funds are great. We have 896 buildings under construction at this time. This is a tremendous undertaking. Think of it—nearly 900 buildings. I know of nothing else like it. It is made possible by the consecrations of the Saints in obedience to the commandments of God. As you know, we have changed

the ratio of participation for construction of buildings. A 70 to 30 percent ratio was in effect until recently in most areas, and this has now been changed to a 96 to 4 ratio. The funds for most building construction come from the tithes of the Church. We are pleased that this change is possible.

The Council on the Disposition of the Tithes, established by revelation and consisting of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric, has determined that the expenditures of the Church in any given year shall not exceed the income of the Church.

Temples

Six new temples were dedicated during 1983. We anticipate the dedication of an additional six in 1984, and yet another six new temples in 1985. This morning we announced the construction of five additional temples to be located in the areas of Bogotá, Colombia; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Portland, Oregon; San Diego, California; and Las Vegas, Nevada.

This is a tremendously significant thing. It has been a remarkable and wonderful experience to meet, along with my Brethren, with worthy and faithful Latter-day Saints in new temples in Atlanta, Georgia; in Tonga, Samoa, and Tahiti; in Santiago, Chile; and in Mexico City. One has to have that experience to fully appreciate it. In each instance people gathered from far and near—well dressed, clean, radiant men, women, and children, with great faith in their hearts and a living conviction concerning the sacred nature and purposes of these holy houses.

I have looked into their faces. I have seen the tears running down their cheeks as strong men and women have wept with love and thanksgiving to God for the blessings of the house of the Lord. They know—these tens and tens of thousands—that only in temples does the authority of the Holy Priesthood become effective in sealings that reach beyond life to all eternity. They

know that only through the ordinances of these sacred houses can the prison doors be opened for their forebears to enjoy all the blessings of the eternal gospel that a loving Father has in store for his children.

Miracle of tithing

It is a miracle to me that the Church is able to accomplish so much. It is a miracle made possible by faith, under a plan which the Lord himself established for the financing of his kingdom.

Tithing is so simple and straightforward a thing. The principle, as it applies to us, is actually set forth in one verse of section 119 of the Doctrine and Covenants. That fourth verse consists of thirty-five words. Contrast that with the cumbersome and complex tax codes enacted and enforced by governments. In the one case it is a brief statement from the Lord, the payment left to the individual and motivated by faith. With the other it is a tangled web created by men and enforced by law.

Conserving Church resources

The Church will live within its means. You may be assured of that. You may be further assured that we shall make every effort to safeguard these sacred funds to see that they are spent wisely to fill those needs which are in harmony with the great mission of the Church.

As a means of conserving Church resources, while at the same time expanding the opportunity for volunteer service, we are pursuing a program under which many retired brethren and sisters are serving on a volunteer basis in the temples and the departments and offices of the Church. You may be interested to know that the number so serving is approximately 5,000, which equates to approximately 500 full-time employees, with a consequent saving to the Church in annual dollar value of salary and benefits in excess of ten million dollars. These wonderful and dedi-

cated people work expertly and with love in their hearts to advance the cause.

By way of personal testimony, while speaking of the financial resources of the Church, we reiterate the promise of the Lord given anciently through the prophet Malachi that he will open the windows of heaven upon those who are honest with him in the payment of their tithes and offerings, that there shall not be room enough to receive the promised blessings. Every honest tithe payer can testify that the Lord keeps his promise.

Church education, Book of Mormon, satellite network

Our great program of Church education moves forward. The work of training students through the seminary and institute program is constantly being enlarged. As of the end of the year there were 389,258 students enrolled in seminaries and institutes. You who have been the recipients of this program know of its tremendous value. We urge all for whom it is available to take advantage of it. We do not hesitate to promise that your knowledge of the gospel will be increased, your faith will be strengthened, and you will develop wonderful associations and friendships with those of your own kind.

I reflect at times on the faith that went into the translation and first printing of the Book of Mormon. There were 5,000 copies in that first edition that came off the press in Palmyra in March of 1830. In recent years the Book of Mormon has been printed in editions of more than a million copies a year, and either all or substantial parts of the book are printed in sixty-seven languages.

I read these words from that sacred volume:

"O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!" (Alma 29:1).

We have not reached that state, but we have taken a giant step forward in that direction. Many thousands of you brethren across this land are joined with us this night with both voice and picture through the remarkable satellite network which the Church has established. Through its facilities we can declare the word of the Lord to our people from coast to coast and beyond to Alaska and the islands of Hawaii. We constantly are at work to expand the reach of this remarkable facility.

1,458 stakes, 14,000 wards and branches

Now another matter: It was my privilege to preside over the 150th stake of the Church which was created in 1945, 115 years after the Church was organized. Now, less than forty years later, there are 1,458 stakes, almost a tenfold increase in the number of stakes in Zion; 378 new wards and branches were organized during 1983, bringing the total at the close of the year to nearly 14,000. Small wonder that we must construct so many new buildings in which to house the Latter-day Saints for worship and instruction.

All of these matters that I have commented upon are statistical in their nature. For the most part they may be classified as temporal. But there is an even more important element with which we are concerned, and that is the spiritual quality of the lives of our people.

This work will not fail

We know that an increasing number are attending their sacrament meetings, there to renew their covenants with the Lord and to take upon themselves anew the name of Christ. We know that an increasing number are holding their family home evenings and spending a part of each Sabbath together as families, learning of the ways of the Lord. We have reason to believe that more and more are involved in the regular practice of family prayer. We

are confident that an increasing number are reading from the scriptures and drawing inspiration therefrom.

In recent months I have had the opportunity of speaking with sixty-three men and extending to them calls to serve as presidents of missions. One cannot have such an experience without coming to recognize the depth of faith found in the hearts of this people. Husbands and wives and children, at the call of the Church, are willing to leave the comforts of their homes, the association of their friends and loved ones, and their employment to go out to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, the work of the Lord is advancing as much as at any time in its history and ever more rapidly. As individuals we may fail in our part in it, but if we do so God will raise up others to take our places, for he will not permit this work to fail.

The cause of the Master

We are familiar with stories that the work would fail. When the Book of Mormon came from the press, the crude critics said it would soon be forgotten. When troubles grew in Kirtland, the enemies said the work would fail. When the Saints were driven from Missouri, those who drove them said the Church would soon expire. When the Prophet and Hyrum were killed in Carthage, their murderers said it was the end of this thing. When in February of 1846 the wagons crossed the river into the Iowa winter, the enemies of the Church said that it could not survive. When the Saints found themselves in this lonely valley, with crickets devouring their crops, there were even some of them who thought it was all over.

But the work has gone forward. The Church has never taken a backward step since it was organized in 1830—and it never will. It is the cause of the Master. It is the church of God. It is his work established in this latter day. It is the little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands,

which should roll forth to fill the whole earth. (See Daniel 2:44-45.) God bless it as it moves forward on its great advancing course. And may each of us be found faithful and true and doing our part in advancing it, I humbly pray as I leave you my witness and testimony

of its truth and divinity in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Choir sang "Sweet Is the Work, My God, My King."

Elder Jacob de Jager offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING MEETING

FOURTH SESSION

The fourth session of the general conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 8, 1984. President Gordon B. Hinckley, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger directing and John Longhurst at the organ.

Prior to the opening of the session, the Choir sang "Father, Thy Children to Thee Now Raise" without announcement.

President Hinckley made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

As those of you in the Tabernacle noted, President Spencer W. Kimball just came in. We are pleased and honored and delighted to have him here this morning. I said to him, "Shall we go ahead with the conference?" He said, "Yes, go ahead." We do so.

We welcome all who are present this morning in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on Temple Square in this fourth general session of the 154th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge those tuned to this conference by radio and television,

those who are seated in the overflow congregation in the Assembly Hall where Elders Dean L. Larsen and George P. Lee preside, and those participating through satellite transmission assembled in over 650 stake centers in the United States and Canada.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and officers and members of the Church from many lands who have assembled to worship and to counsel together in this conference.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger with John Longhurst at the organ, is providing the music for this session.

The Choir opened these services by singing "Father, Thy Children to Thee Now Raise." It will now sing "God Loved Us, So He Sent His Son," following which Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

The Choir sang "God Loved Us, So He Sent His Son."

Elder Robert D. Hales offered the invocation.

The Choir sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King" without announcement.
