

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you most warmly to this general conference, which has become a great world conference of the Church.

These proceedings will be heard and seen across this nation and Canada and in much of the remainder of the world. I think there is nothing to compare with it. I commend and thank all who have to do with the complicated logistics of this great undertaking.

The gospel has been restored

We are met to worship the Lord, to declare His divinity and His living reality. We are met to reaffirm our love for Him and our knowledge of His love for us. No one, regardless of what he or she may say, can diminish that love.

There are some who try. For instance, there are some of other faiths who do not regard us as Christians. That is not important. How we regard ourselves is what is important. We acknowledge without hesitation that there are differences between us. Were this not so, there would have been no need for a restoration of the gospel. President Packer and Elder Ballard recently spoke of this in other settings.

I hope we do not argue over this matter. There is no reason to debate it. We simply, quietly, and without apology testify that God has revealed Himself and His Beloved Son in opening this full and final dispensation of His work.

We must not become disagreeable as we talk of doctrinal differences. There is no place for acrimony. But we can never surrender or compromise that knowledge which has come to us through revelation and the direct bestowal of keys and authority under the hands of those who held them anciently. Let us never forget that this is a restoration of that which was instituted by the Savior of the world. It is not a reforma-

tion of perceived false practice and doctrine that may have developed through the centuries.

We must respect other religions

We can respect other religions and must do so. We must recognize the great good they accomplish. We must teach our children to be tolerant and friendly toward those not of our faith. We can and do work with those of other religions in the defense of those values which have made our civilization great and our society distinctive.

For instance, there recently came to my office a Protestant minister who is a most effective leader in the unending battle against pornography. We are grateful for him. We join with him and his associates. We give financial support to his organization.

We can and do work with those of other religions in various undertakings in the everlasting fight against social evils which threaten the treasured values which are so important to all of us. These people are not of our faith, but they are our friends, neighbors, and co-workers in a variety of causes. We are pleased to lend our strength to their efforts.

But in all of this there is no doctrinal compromise. There need not be and must not be on our part. But there is a degree of fellowship as we labor together.

As we carry forward our distinctive mission, we work under a mandate given us by the risen Lord, who has spoken in this last and final dispensation. This is His unique and wonderful cause. We bear testimony and witness of Him. But we need not do so with arrogance or self-righteousness.

As Peter expressed it, we are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." Why?

That we might “shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

A holier-than-thou attitude is not becoming to us. I am in receipt of a letter from a man in our community who is not a member of the Church. In it he says that his little daughter has been ostracized by her schoolmates who are Latter-day Saints. He sets forth another instance of a child who, it is alleged, had a religious medal ripped from his neck by an LDS child. I hope this is not true. If it is, I apologize to those who have been offended.

Let us rise above all such conduct and teach our children to do likewise. Let us be true disciples of the Christ, observing the Golden Rule, doing unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us strengthen our own faith and that of our children while being gracious to those who are not of our faith. Love and respect will overcome every element of animosity. Our kindness may be the most persuasive argument for that which we believe.

Dedication of buildings in Palmyra

Now, one other matter. A week ago I was in Palmyra, New York. I there dedicated two buildings. One was a restoration of the small log home in which the Joseph Smith Sr. family first lived in that area. It was in this humble home that the 14-year-old Joseph determined to go into the nearby grove to ask of God and experienced an incomparable vision of the Father and the Son.

It was in this home that Moroni, the angel, appeared to the boy Joseph, calling him by name and telling him that God had a work for him to do and that his “name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

How could a farm boy, largely without formal education, have dared to say such a thing? And yet it has all come to pass and will continue to increase as this restored gospel is taught across the world.

While in Palmyra, I also dedicated the E. B. Grandin Building, where the first edition of the Book of Mormon was printed in 1829 and 1830. It was a bold undertaking to print what Mr. Grandin first regarded as a fraud, and to print an edition of 5,000, which was very large for the time. I am pleased to remind you that since that time we have printed more than 88 million copies of this remarkable volume.

I am grateful that we have this old building, purchased by a generous member of the Church and donated to the Church. Its very presence confirms the validity of the book, this remarkable testament of the Son of God.

Who, having read it, can honestly refute its divine origin? Critics may try to explain it away. The harder they try the more plausible becomes the true account of its coming forth as a voice speaking from the dust.

Gratitude for testimony

How grateful I am for the testimony with which God has blessed me of the divine calling of Joseph Smith, of the reality of the First Vision, of the restoration of the priesthood, of the truth of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And so, my beloved brothers and sisters, let us rejoice together now as we celebrate with appreciation the wondrous doctrines and practices which have come as a gift from the Lord in this most glorious time of His work. This is the Easter season, when we remember His glorious Resurrection, of which we bear witness. Let us ever be grateful for these most precious gifts and privileges and act well our part as those who love

the Lord. I invite you to listen to the words which will go forth from this pulpit, to be delivered by those who have

been called as your servants. May we be blessed I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder David B. Haight

My dear brothers and sisters, what a wonderful occasion, what a beautiful day, what a glorious time this is, particularly for me, to have an opportunity to stand here following that stirring declaration and testimony of God's prophet here upon the earth.

Meeting at the Peter Whitmer farmhouse

As President Hinckley held up that copy of the Book of Mormon from the first edition, I thought of an experience we had a few years ago as we attended a mission presidents' seminar. At the closing of the two-day seminar in the Palmyra-Fayette area, we held a dinner in the reconstructed Peter Whitmer farmhouse, that beautiful little building where the Church was organized 168 years ago this weekend. It was such a moving occasion. The only cooking arrangement they had in that little log cabin was the fireplace. We looked at the fireplace, with a pot hanging where they did their cooking. They didn't have any of the conveniences of today, of course. There was a well outside for their water.

Near the end of that very spiritual meeting with those mission presidents, I walked up the stairs and looked at the two little bedrooms. The Peter Whitmer family lived there. But they turned one of those rooms over to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and there he did some of the translating of the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery worked with him in that humble little setting. My heart burned with the wonderful feeling I had just been in that little farmhouse and imagin-

ing what took place and the blessings of heaven that had been poured out upon them.

As we left our meeting that evening and left that little farmhouse, there was a full moon shining down through the trees. I said to Ruby, "I can imagine the night of April 6, 1830, after that small group had assembled, the Church had been organized, and six men agreeable to its organization were present to be in harmony with the laws of the state of New York. I can imagine what was said, what was prophesied about the future of the Church, and the testimonies that would have been borne." Then I said, "I would imagine that on the night of April the 6th, 1830, there was a full moon shining, showing that our Savior was smiling upon that occasion and upon that setting."

Later I expressed that idea to a group where Brother Chamberlain, who then was the director of the Hansen Planetarium in Salt Lake, heard me say it. He was thoughtful enough to get in touch with the naval observatory to find out what might have happened on April the 6th, 1830. They didn't have records back that far, so he was thoughtful enough to contact the Royal Observatory at Greenwich in England for records that might have been available over there. He later sent me some documents indicating what was happening in the horizon that week of April the 6th, 1830, indicating that there was a full or beautifully beaming moon those days before and after April the 6th. The glories of the Lord had been poured out upon the occasion.