

West, Robert J. Whetten, Lance B. Wickman, Richard H. Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, and Robert S. Wood

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 2, 1999, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined Salt Lake and Orem Institutes Choir, with Douglas Brenchley conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ. To begin this session, the choir sang "Glory to God on High." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

With that stirring music, my brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder David B. Haight.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the over-

flow locations in the nearby Assembly Hall and Joseph Smith Memorial Building. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Tabernacle.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are with us.

The music for this session will be provided by a combined Salt Lake and Orem Institutes Choir, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Glory to God on High" and will now favor us with "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Andrew W. Peterson of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Andrew W. Peterson offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Welcome to conference

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this great world conference of the Church. We are grateful for

your presence and for the efforts you have made to be here. We are grateful for the association of our brothers and sisters assembled in thousands of halls across the world.

The Church grows ever larger. It touches more and more lives for good. It is spreading over the earth in a wonderful way.

New temples dedicated

I take the opportunity this morning to advise you briefly of the progress we are making toward the goal of 100 working temples in the year 2000.

Since the first of this year we have dedicated temples in Anchorage, Alaska; Colonia Juárez, Mexico; Madrid, Spain; Bogotá, Colombia; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Spokane, Washington; Columbus, Ohio; and Bismarck, North Dakota—eight in all. Between now and the end of the year, we will dedicate temples in Columbia, South Carolina; Detroit, Michigan; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Regina, Saskatchewan; Billings, Montana; Edmonton, Alberta; and Raleigh, North Carolina—seven more. At the conclusion of 1999, we anticipate that there will be 68 operating temples.

It has been a wonderful experience to participate in these dedicatory services. Most satisfying of all has been the enthusiasm of the people. The spirit of temple work rests upon them. They are so grateful to have a house of the Lord nearer their homes. Some of them have traveled so very far in the past. Many of them still do. As we have gathered in these sacred services, while consecrating these hallowed buildings, we have seen many with tears in their eyes.

Boys and girls in large numbers have attended these services. They have been reminded that these temples are not only for their parents but also for them. When 12 years of age, they may enter the house of the Lord and stand as proxies in baptisms for those beyond the veil of death. What a great and unselfish service this is. What a wonderful thing for our youth to be involved in this totally selfless act in behalf of others who are powerless to help themselves.

Family history work is increasing

Going hand in hand with this increased temple activity is an increase in our family history work. The computer in its various ramifications is accelerating the work, and people are taking advantage of the new techniques being offered to them. How can one escape the conclusion that the Lord is in all of this? As computer facilities improve, the number of temples grows to accommodate the accelerated family history work.

Temples represent ultimate in worship

Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of nonmembers have attended the open houses associated with these new temples. They have done so with reverence and respect. In many cases the temples are, without question, the finest buildings in the cities in which they are located. People marvel at their beauty. But among many things, they are most impressed with pictures of the Savior they see in these holy houses. They will no longer regard us as a non-Christian people. They must know that the central figure in all of our worship is the Lord Jesus Christ.

This building of so many temples has been and is a tremendous undertaking. You cannot believe what is involved in it unless you are closely associated with the process. Every one of these buildings, large or small, is constructed in the best manner of which we know, using the very best of materials. Their cost is much more than that of a chapel. This is because they are built to higher standards. I express appreciation to the very many dedicated men and women who are working on this tremendous project.

Every ordinance which is given in the Salt Lake Temple, the largest in the Church, is also given in every other temple, including these smaller structures. The fact is that they are not so

small. They are commodious, and they are beautiful. They represent the ultimate in our worship and the ultimate in blessings offered.

Dedication of 42 temples planned

We plan to break ground later this month for the Nauvoo Temple. Many people are excited and many are contributing to this historic undertaking.

We shall go on with the work of dedication next year. It will be a very busy season. We anticipate the dedication of perhaps as many as 42 more. When we finish the year 2000, if present plans materialize, we will have not only the 100 which we have striven for, but more beyond that.

We shall not stop then. We may not build at the same pace, but we shall go on for as long as the Lord wills that it be done.

A glorious season in God's work

Brethren and sisters, it is a glorious season in this work. God, our Eternal Father, is blessing His cause, His kingdom, and His people. The resources of the Church, including the facilities for temple work, are increasing.

In view of the fact that we do not build a temple until there are sufficient people in the area, until there are sufficient tithe payers, and until there is sufficient faith, the very construction of these sacred buildings becomes an indicator of the increase of faith and obedience to the principles of the gospel.

May we enjoy the blessings of the Lord as we go forward in this great work, which affects not only the living but the great multitude of the dead of all generations. For this I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Thy Holy House."

President Hinckley

We thank Brother Andrew Peterson for his beautiful prayer. We regard his very presence here as a miracle and as a manifestation of the healing power of the Lord.

The choir has just sung "Thy Holy House." We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

As his prophetic words have just demonstrated, we are so blessed to have President Hinckley!

Lessons from Laman and Lemuel

Brothers and sisters, on very thin pages, thick with meaning, are some almost hidden scriptures. Hence we are urged to *search, feast, and ponder* (see John 5:39; Alma 14:1; Alma 33:2; Moroni 10:3; 2 Nephi 9:51). Especially, however, we should also do more of what

Nephi did, namely "liken all scriptures unto [ourselves]" (1 Nephi 19:23).

Illustratively, words which we should so "liken" occur twice with regard to Laman and Lemuel, mistakenly regarded by some as merely "stick figures." Consider, therefore, how the applications of these next words go far beyond those two: "And thus Laman and Lemuel . . . did murmur . . . because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them" (1 Nephi 2:12; see also Mosiah 10:14).