

standing bring comfort to a troubled soul and a grieving heart. Shadows of despair are dispelled by rays of hope; sorrow yields to joy; and the feeling of being lost in the crowd of life vanishes with the certain knowledge that our Heavenly Father is mindful of each of us.

In closing, I return to the painting by Turner. In a very real sense, those persons stranded on the vessel which had run aground in the storm-tossed sea are like many young men—and older men as well—who await rescue by those of us who have the priesthood responsibility to man the lifeboats. Their hearts yearn for help. Mothers and fathers pray for their sons. Wives and children plead to heaven that Daddy and others may be reached.

Tonight I pray that all of us who hold the priesthood may sense our responsibilities and, as one, follow our Leader—even the Lord Jesus Christ, and His prophet,

President Gordon B. Hinckley—to the rescue. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Brian H. Stuy, comp., *Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, 5 vols. (1987–92), 2:87.
2. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 Aug. 1878, 1.
3. Matthew 4:19.
4. "We Are All Enlisted," *Hymns*, no. 250.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
6. James 1:22.
7. Ephesians 2:19.
8. John 11:43.
9. John 9:25.
10. Alfred Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, section 85, stanza 5, line 4; spelling modernized.
11. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, 8 vols. (1953), 1:273.
12. Matthew 25:40.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, before I begin my talk I want to congratulate very warmly this Melchizedek Priesthood choir, composed of men from many walks of life, all singing together out of their hearts filled with testimony of the hymns of Zion. Brethren, thank you very, very much.

The Perpetual Emigration Fund

Now, I seek the inspiration of the Lord as I speak briefly on what I consider to be a very important subject.

I begin by taking you back 150 years and more. In 1849 our forebears faced a serious problem. Our people had then been in the Salt Lake Valley for two years. Missionaries in the British Isles and Europe continued to gather converts. They came into the Church by the hundreds. When they were baptized, they desired to gather to Zion. Their strength and their

skills were needed here, and their wish to come was very strong. But many of them were distressingly poor, and they had no money with which to buy passage. How were they to get here?

Under the inspiration of the Lord, a plan was devised. What was known as the Perpetual Emigration Fund was established. Under this plan, funded by the Church, notwithstanding its serious poverty at that time, money was loaned to those members who had little or nothing. Loans were made with the understanding that when the converts arrived here, they would find employment, and as they were able to do so, they would pay off the loan. The money repaid would then be loaned to others to make it possible for them to emigrate. It was a revolving resource. It was truly a Perpetual Emigration Fund.

With the help of this fund, it is estimated that some 30,000 converts to the

Church were enabled to gather to Zion. They became a great strength to the work here. Some of them came with needed skills, such as stone masonry, and others developed skills. They were able to perform a tremendous service in constructing buildings, including the Salt Lake Temple and Tabernacle, and doing other work which required expertise. They came here by wagons and by handcarts. Notwithstanding the terrible handcart tragedy of 1856, when approximately 200 of them died from cold and sickness on the plains of Wyoming, they traveled safely and became an important part of the family of the Church in these mountain valleys.

For instance, James Moyle was a stonemason in Plymouth, England, when he was baptized at the age of 17. Of that occasion he wrote:

"I then covenanted with the Lord that I would serve Him through good and evil report. It was the turning point in my life, as it kept me from evil company" (in Gordon B. Hinckley, *James Henry Moyle* [1951], 18).

Notwithstanding his skill as a mason, he had little money. He borrowed from the Perpetual Emigration Fund and left England in 1854, sailed to America, crossed the plains, and almost immediately secured employment as a stonemason on the Lion House at \$3 a day. He saved his money, and when he had \$70, the amount of his indebtedness, he promptly repaid the Emigration Fund. He said, "I then considered that I was a free man" (see *Moyle*, 19-24).

When the Perpetual Emigration Fund was no longer needed, it was dissolved. I believe that many within the sound of my voice are descendants of those who were blessed by reason of this fund. You are today prosperous and secure because of what was done for your forebears.

Economic trials of young members today

Now, my brethren, we face another problem in the Church. We have many

missionaries, both young men and young women, who are called locally and serve with honor in Mexico, Central America, South America, the Philippines, and other places. They have very little money, but they make a contribution with what they have. They are largely supported from the General Missionary Fund, to which many of you contribute, and for these contributions we are very deeply grateful.

They become excellent missionaries, working side by side with elders and sisters sent from the United States and Canada. While in this service, they come to know how the Church operates. They develop a broadened understanding of the gospel. They learn to speak some English. They work with faith and devotion. Then comes the day of their release. They return to their homes. Their hopes are high. But many of them have great difficulty finding employment because they have no skills. They sink right back into the pit of poverty from which they came.

Because of limited abilities, they are unlikely to become leaders in the Church. They are more likely to find themselves in need of welfare help. They will marry and rear families who will continue in the same cycle that they have known. Their future is bleak indeed. There are some others who have not gone on missions who find themselves in similar circumstances in development of skills to lift them from the ranks of the poor.

The Perpetual Education Fund

In an effort to remedy this situation, we propose a plan—a plan which we believe is inspired by the Lord. The Church is establishing a fund, largely from the contributions of faithful Latter-day Saints who have and will contribute for this purpose. We are deeply grateful to them. Based on similar principles to those underlying the Perpetual Emigration Fund, we shall call it the Perpetual Education Fund.

From the earnings of this fund, loans will be made to ambitious young men and women, for the most part returned missionaries, so that they may borrow money to attend school. Then when they qualify for employment, it is anticipated that they will return that which they have borrowed, together with a small amount of interest designed as an incentive to repay the loan.

It is expected that they will attend school in their own communities. They can live at home. We have an excellent institute program established in these countries, where they can be kept close to the Church. The directors of these institutes are familiar with the educational opportunities in their own cities. Initially, most of these students will attend technical schools, where they will learn such things as computer science, refrigeration engineering, and other skills which are in demand and for which they can become qualified. The plan may later be extended to training for the professions.

It is expected that these young men and women will attend institute, where the director can keep track of their progress. Those desiring to participate in the program will make application to the institute director. He will clear them through their local bishops and stake presidents to determine that they are worthy and in need of help. Their names and the prescribed amount of their loans will then be sent to Salt Lake City, where funds will be issued, payable not to the individual but to the institution where they will receive their schooling. There will be no temptation to use the money for other purposes.

We shall have a strong oversight board here in Salt Lake and a director of the program who will be an emeritus General Authority, a man with demonstrated business and technical skills and who has agreed to accept this responsibility as a volunteer.

It entails no new organization, no new personnel except a volunteer director and

secretary. It will cost essentially nothing to administer.

We shall begin modestly, commencing this fall. We can envision the time when this program will benefit a very substantial number.

How the fund will bless our members

With good employment skills, these young men and women can rise out of the poverty they and generations before them have known. They will better provide for their families. They will serve in the Church and grow in leadership and responsibility. They will repay their loans to make it possible for others to be blessed as they have been blessed. It will become a revolving fund. As faithful members of the Church, they will pay their tithes and offerings, and the Church will be much the stronger for their presence in the areas where they live.

There is an old saying that if you give a man a fish, he will have a meal for a day. But if you teach him how to fish, he will eat for the remainder of his life.

Now, this is a bold initiative, but we believe in the need for it and in the success that it will enjoy. It will be carried forward as an official program of the Church with all that this implies. It will become a blessing to all whose lives it touches—to the young men and women, to their future families, to the Church that will be blessed with their strong local leadership.

It is affordable. We have enough money, already contributed, to fund the initial operation. It will work because it will follow priesthood lines and because it will function on a local basis. It will deal with down-to-earth skills and needed fields of expertise. Participation in the program will carry with it no stigma of any kind, but rather a sense of pride in what is happening. It will not be a welfare effort, commendable as those efforts are, but rather an education opportunity. The beneficiaries will repay the money, and when they do so they will enjoy a wonder-

ful sense of freedom because they have improved their lives not through a grant or gift but through borrowing and then repaying. They can hold their heads high in a spirit of independence. The likelihood of their remaining faithful and active throughout their lives will be very high.

We are already carrying forward in limited areas an employment service under the welfare program of the Church. This consists primarily of offices of referral. The matter of education will rest with the Perpetual Education Fund. The operation of employment centers will rest with the welfare program. These employment centers deal with men and women who are seeking employment and have skills but lack proper referrals. The one is a rotating education fund to make possible the development of skills. The other is the placing of men and women in improved employment who already have some marketable skills.

United, we can help our poor

President Clark used to tell us in these general priesthood meetings that there is nothing that the priesthood cannot accomplish if we will work unitedly together in moving forward a program designed to bless the people (see J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 180).

May the Lord grant us vision and understanding to do those things which will help our members not only spiritually but also temporally. We have resting upon us a very serious obligation. President Joseph F. Smith said nearly a hundred years ago that a religion which will not help a man in this life will not likely do much for him in the life to come (see "The Truth about Mormonism," *Out West* magazine, Sept. 1905, 242).

Where there is widespread poverty among our people, we must do all we can to help them to lift themselves, to establish their lives upon a foundation of self-reliance that can come of training.

Education is the key to opportunity. This training must be done in the areas where they live. It will then be suited to the opportunities of those areas. And it will cost much less in such places than it would if it were done in the United States or Canada or Europe.

May God prosper this program

Now, this is not an idle dream. We have the resources through the goodness and kindness of wonderful and generous friends. We have the organization. We have the manpower and dedicated servants of the Lord to make it succeed. It is an all-volunteer effort that will cost the Church practically nothing. We pray humbly and gratefully that God will prosper this effort and that it will bring blessings, rich and wonderful, upon the heads of thousands, just as its predecessor organization, the Perpetual Emigration Fund, brought untold blessings upon the lives of those who partook of its opportunities.

As I have said, some have already given very substantial amounts to fund the corpus whose earnings will be used to meet the need. But we will need considerably more. We invite others who wish to contribute to do so.

We anticipate there may be some failures in the repayment of loans. But we are confident that most will do what is expected of them, and generations will be blessed. We may anticipate that future generations will also be in need, for as Jesus said, "The poor always ye have with you" (John 12:8). It must, therefore, be a revolving fund.

It is our solemn obligation, it is our certain responsibility, my brethren, to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5). We must help them to become self-reliant and successful.

I believe the Lord does not wish to see His people condemned to live in poverty. I believe He would have the faithful enjoy the good things of the earth. He would

have us do these things to help them. And He will bless us as we do so. For the success of this undertaking I humbly pray, while soliciting your interest, your faith, your prayers, your concerns in its behalf. I do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling."

Elder H. Bruce Stucki offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 171st Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 1, 2001. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. To begin the session, the choir sang "Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice." President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice," and will now favor us with "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy. The choir will then sing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer," after which President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker.

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

Elder Robert J. Whetten offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

President James E. Faust

Recollections of baptism

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends, the responsibility of speaking to all of you is a matter of great concern to me. I pray for your understanding.

My baptism into this Church was one of the highlights of my life. I was eight years of age. My parents taught me and my brothers the significance of this great ordinance. My mother told me that after my baptism I would be held accountable