

To this I add my solemn witness of the divinity of his calling, of the virtue of his life, and of the sealing of his testimony with his death, in the sacred name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Praise to the Man."
Elder Shirley D. Christensen offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 175th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 3, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 175th 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 and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" At the conclusion of the singing, Elders L. Tom Perry and Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. They will be followed by Elder Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder Carlos H. Amado offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Where Can I Turn for Peace?"

Elder L. Tom Perry

What seek ye?

It is always difficult to follow this magnificent choir. Thank you, choir, again for your beautiful music.

"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

"And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

"And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

"Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?" (John 1:35–38).

We find a world today looking for answers to the question "What seek ye?" in so many different ways. Too many are

sowing seeds of a fruit that will not nourish an eternal soul.

Discussion on a train in Europe

Let me illustrate with an experience the Europe Central Area Presidency had while traveling by train to a meeting. We were taking advantage of the time together by discussing our assignment. A man who was seated across the aisle became curious about our conversation. He finally asked, “Are you Protestant or Catholic?” We replied, “Neither. We are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” He acknowledged that he had heard of the Church but then went on to say, “You’ll never get very far in this country. The government only recognizes the Catholic and Protestant churches. They are the only ones who receive government financial support. A church cannot exist without government financial support.”

We tried to explain that our Church manages very well without government help—that we use the Lord’s system of tithing. He insisted our Church would not get very far in his country and suggested that perhaps we should place our efforts in some other part of the world. Of course we testified that the Lord’s system does work and told him about all the chapels and temples we are constructing throughout the world without having to resort to borrowed funds to build them. He seemed very surprised but still unconvinced.

Seeing that we could not persuade him that a church could exist without government support, we tried to change the subject. I asked, “What will happen in your country with the changes that are occurring? The declining population and the influx of an increasing number of immigrants will eventually make you a minority in your own land.”

With great national pride, he replied, “This will never happen.”

I countered, “How can you support such a position with immigration exceeding

your country’s birthrate?” He kept insisting this would never happen in his country—“Why, they would close the borders of our land before they would allow it to occur.”

I pressed on, “How can you prevent it with your current trends?”

His next statement shocked me: “I’m 82 years old. I will be long gone before we have to face that problem.”

Apathy toward religion

A major problem we face in preaching the gospel in this area of the world is the general apathy toward religion, toward things spiritual. Too many are very comfortable with their present lifestyle and feel no need to do more than “eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19). They are not interested in anything but themselves—here and now.

Developing nations of the world are becoming so secular in their beliefs and actions that they reason that a human being has total autonomy. An individual does not have to give an account to anyone or anything except to himself and, to a limited extent, to the society in which he lives.

Societies in which this secular lifestyle takes root have a deep spiritual and moral price to pay. The pursuit of so-called individual freedoms, without regard to laws the Lord has established to govern His children on earth, will result in the curse of extreme worldliness and selfishness, the decline of public and private morality, and the defiance of authority.

The Church provides answers

Such secular societies are described in Doctrine and Covenants 1:16: “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world.”

For this reason the Lord’s Church was instructed to follow the prophet and seek something different from what the world

is seeking. Continuing on with verses 17–18 from section 1:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

“And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets.”

It was through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Church of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth—“line upon line, precept upon precept” (D&C 98:12). With divine assistance he translated and published the Book of Mormon. The Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were conferred upon him and Oliver Cowdery, and sacred ordinances were reinstated for the saving of mankind.

We boldly declare that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provides answers to the question “What seek ye?” Our Church is the means by which men and women find our Savior and His gospel. You who are gathered here in this vast congregation, and the even greater numbers of Saints viewing this conference throughout the world, are richly blessed, for you have sought and found the restored Church.

Seek the Savior through His Church

The Church came into being as the result of a restoration and not a reformation. My recent experiences in central Europe certainly have deepened my respect for the role of those early Christian leaders who instituted a reformation. It began with their efforts to correct some of the errors in doctrine which had come into being during the long period of apostasy from the Church that had been established by our Savior during His earthly ministry. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, the Lord’s mouth-

piece, and the restorer of all things important to building the kingdom of God and preparing for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we seek our Savior, it is important that we seek Him through His Church. It is through His restored Church that we receive all the saving ordinances necessary to return to Him.

Stories about finding new hope and faith

I want all the members of the Church to know that I have learned from my current assignment that sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ involves challenges I had never before imagined. Yet every day I see new signs of hope, due mostly to the Lord’s blessings but also to the efforts of the leaders, members, and missionaries in that area of the world. Honest seekers of truth are finding answers to their questions—they are finding the Lord through His restored Church. Of the many examples I could give, let me give you three: a father, a young single adult, and a single sister who have found a new faith and a new hope in their lives.

A father’s change of heart

A family of four was initially contacted by sister missionaries, and from the very beginning the mother and her children often read in the Book of Mormon, prayed daily, and wanted to attend church. The father, however, resisted. Unlike his wife, he was not of a Christian faith, and he did not yet feel prepared to reevaluate his beliefs.

The sister missionaries were inspired to focus their teachings on Jesus Christ. In their words:

“We taught about Joseph Smith, of his faith in Christ, what we learn about Christ from the First Vision, and the Prophet’s testimony of our Savior. Everything we ever read together or challenged them to read as a family out of the Book of Mormon was teaching them more about our Redeemer. That is when we started seeing

the progress. They displayed a framed picture of Christ proudly in their family room—it was one we had given them as a gift.”

The father’s change of heart occurred when his wife announced that she wanted to be baptized and his sons decided to pray to know whether they should also be baptized. From that moment on, he read regularly in the Book of Mormon and prayed about baptism. His sincere desire to know whether the Church was true changed him, and he became a spiritual leader in his home. Just before he and his family were baptized, the father asked for a tithing slip and an envelope. He did not want to delay keeping the commandments for even one second.

A reactivated brother shares the gospel

In another case, a young brother was reactivated as the result of the establishment of the outreach initiative to bring into activity young single adults ages 18 to 30. On the first night of activities in one of our Church buildings, this brother was the only nonmissionary attending, but within a few weeks, he had brought about 30 people to family home evening and other activities.

This brother is a Web site designer—he and a partner started their own Web design business. He currently lives with two nonmembers, both of whom work at his Web design company. He is very bold about sharing his testimony. One of his co-workers previously had studied Christian theology, and this brother referred him to the missionaries working in the young single adult program. Now his co-worker is a regular attendee of the activities, and this reactivated brother assists the missionaries as they teach him by adding his testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel to theirs.

A young woman’s miraculous conversion

In still another case, a young woman from Hamburg, Germany, was struggling to find spiritual meaning to her life. She began

to pray and ask God what she should do. One morning, after three days of some fasting and much prayer, she walked from her home to the bus stop. As she arrived, she realized she had left some keys at home that she needed that day. She returned home, picked up the keys, and walked again to the bus stop. She was quite distraught as she realized she had missed the bus she would have normally taken.

Meanwhile, two missionaries were traveling on a bus near the city of Hamburg. As they were traveling, they suddenly had an impression that they should talk to the first person they met after exiting the bus. The two elders got out of the bus and instantly saw this young woman. They spoke to her briefly about the Church and set up an appointment to teach her. She had an immediate feeling that somehow the elders were sent to her as an answer to her prayers. The good members of the Church joined with the missionaries in teaching her and helping her feel a special part of their ward. She accepted the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and was baptized. Now she is working in the ward Young Women program.

The need for the Church

The Lord, during His earthly ministry, recognized the need to have a structure in place to build faith in the hearts of the members of His Church and to keep them growing in His gospel. This family, this brother, and this sister all found the Savior through finding and being strengthened by His Church.

After the death of the Apostles, without central leadership to guide and direct it, the Church drifted into apostasy. This particular lesson of history is clear: It is necessary to have a centralized Church government, under the direction of the Savior, that provides the necessary doctrines and ordinances for salvation and exaltation.

The Bible gives abundant evidence that the Lord, during His earthly ministry,

established His Church with the proper authority and organization. For example, Paul declared:

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–15).

We state in our sixth article of faith, “We believe in the same organization that

existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.”

Seek, find, and build the Savior’s Church

So we declare to the world that the priesthood has been restored, God’s government is on the earth, His pattern is established that will lead us back to His presence. We believe we have the best answer to the question “What seek ye?” As the Savior taught, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Just as a building is constructed one brick at a time, the Savior’s true Church is built one conversion, one testimony, one baptism at a time. May we all seek, find, and build His Church wherever we may be is my humble prayer, in the name of Him whom we seek, even Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The growing problem of pornography

Last summer Sister Oaks and I returned from two years in the Philippines. We loved our service there, and we loved returning home. When we have been away, we see our surroundings in a new light, with increased appreciation and sometimes with new concerns.

We were concerned to see the inroads pornography had made in the United States while we were away. For many years our Church leaders have warned against the dangers of images and words intended to arouse sexual desires. Now the corrupting influence of pornography, produced and disseminated for commercial gain, is sweeping over our society like an avalanche of evil.

At our last conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley devoted an entire talk to this subject, warning in the plainest terms that “this is a very serious problem even among us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 64; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 61). Most of the bishops we meet in stake conferences now report major concerns with this problem.

My fellow holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and also our young men, I wish to speak to you today about pornography. I know that many of you are exposed to this and that many of you are being stained by it.

Evil acts both completed and contemplated

In concentrating my talk on this subject, I feel like the prophet Jacob, who told