



The RESTORATION

I would like to make this message my testimony of the “restitution of all things”—meaning, of course, the restoration of all things. This is the message and the testimony we all carry into the world.

I thank my wife, Harriet, for her witness and testimony of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. May I share with you the conversion story of my wife’s family many years ago?

One Sunday when I was a teenager attending the Frankfurt Branch in Germany, the missionaries brought a young mother and her two beautiful daughters to our Church meetings. I still remember the impressions I had when I saw those two young girls walking into our chapel—especially about the older daughter. She was about 13 years old, and with her large brown eyes and beautiful black hair, she immediately caught my attention. I thought, “These missionaries are doing a really great job!” Little did I know that this young lady would much later bless my life forever.

But I’m getting ahead of the story. Let me go back and start with how this young family met the missionaries.

The Conversion of Carmen Reich

In the fall of 1954 two missionaries were inside of an apartment house ringing the doorbells in the city of Frankfurt. Gradually

they began working their way up the floors without any success. Finally they rang the bell of the last door on the fourth floor. It was opened by young Harriet, who immediately asked her mother to invite them in. Sister Reich initially hesitated, but after some additional pleading by Harriet, Elder Gary Jenkins from California and his companion were invited in.

These two missionaries were truly guided by the Spirit, not only where to go but also what to say. After briefly explaining who they were and what the message was they wanted to share, the missionaries left a Book of Mormon with the mother, asked her to read the marked scriptures, and departed with a prayer and a blessing.

Two days later they returned. This time the missionaries received a friendly welcome and were invited in quickly. When they asked Sister Reich if she had read the marked scriptures in the Book of Mormon, Sister Reich answered without hesitation, “I read the whole book, and I feel that it is true.”

Sister Carmen Reich was only 36 at the time, a widow with two daughters. Only eight months before, she had lost her husband, a renowned musician, to cancer. After his unexpected death, the family struggled with a number of unanswered questions—Is there a purpose in life? Is there anything after death; and if so, what? Why are we born? Did



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we live before this life?

Let me make it clear that Sister Reich was a religious person. She loved to read, and the Bible was one of her favorite books. She believed firmly that Jesus is the Christ, and as a family they tried to follow His teachings. They were good, honest people, and even the loss of their husband and father could not take away their feeling of family.

However, when Sister Carmen Reich read the Book of Mormon, book-end to book-end, in two days, she felt something she had never before experienced. By her own account, it was “the spirit of revelation.”

She said she could “feel pure intelligence” flowing into her, giving her “sudden strokes of ideas” about the “things of the Spirit of God.” These ideas related to her special circumstances. As the missionaries taught her the plan of salvation and the other doctrines of the Restoration, she continued to “grow into the principle of [personal] revelation” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 132). All the good things she had learned in her Lutheran faith received a new and deeper meaning, and all of a sudden life itself had a totally different and divine eternal perspective.

The Restoration’s Powerful Message

It was not that she felt any enmity for what she had believed for so many years. But when she heard the message of the Restoration, a door was opened into a world flooded with light and filled with love and hope. Looking back, she described her experience this way: It was as if something of great importance had been lifeless and inert but was now resurrected to life, beauty, and activity.

The key messages of the Restoration have the power to bring such feelings to the heart and mind of the earnest seeker of truth, irrespective of the person’s cultural or religious background. There are no geographic or cultural boundaries for the Holy Ghost.

The Restoration in its fulness completes and enhances the truths found in the religions of the world.

Let me finish the story of Sister Reich, my dear mother-in-law. She represents in many ways the multitude of converts who are coming into the Church every day from other religions, both Christian and non-Christian, and even from no religion at all. What characterizes them all is that they are willing and pure enough to believe when God speaks.

Sister Reich was baptized on November 7, 1954. In December, only a few weeks after her baptism, the missionary who baptized her asked that she write her testimony down. Elder Jenkins wanted to use her testimony to help others feel the true spirit of conversion. Fortunately, he kept her handwritten original for more than 40 years and then returned it to my mother-in-law as a very special and loving gift. Carmen Reich, my dear mother-in-law, passed away in 2000 at age 83.

Let me read to you parts of her written testimony. It shows what she, with her background, with her needs and desires at the time she met the missionaries, saw as the key points of the Restoration. This is the English translation of her handwritten testimony:

“Special characteristics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that are not present in other religious communities include, above all:

“Modern revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

“Sacred priesthood authority as in the time of Christ, with a living prophet today.

“Next, the Book of Mormon in its clear and pure language, with all its instructions and promises for the Church of Jesus Christ—truly a second witness with the Bible that Jesus Christ lives.

“Faith in a personal God—that is, God the Father; and God the Son Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost, who facilitates prayer and guides us personally.

“Belief in a premortal life, the pre-existence. Knowledge of the purpose of our earthly life, and of our life after death, is extremely valuable for us to have and is especially interesting and informative. The plan of salvation is so clearly laid out in the restored gospel that our lives receive new meaning and direction.

“The Word of Wisdom. The Church has given us the Word of Wisdom as a guide to help us realize our desire to keep our body and spirit healthy and improve them. This is our goal because we know that we will take our body up again after death in the same form.

“Temple work, with its many sacred ordinances enabling families to be together forever. This doctrine, totally new to me, was given through revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith.”

So we see that the religion into which people are born may be incomplete, but it can still serve as a foundation for the reception of the fulness of the gospel.

Bringing the Message to the World

Just as we recognize and support the privilege of others to worship Almighty God according to their conscience, so we also claim the right to declare our faith and testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ according to our beliefs.

To bring the message and the redemptive power of Christ and His Atonement to the people of the world, we need to declare with courage and clarity the events of 1820 and thereafter. These events, and the revelation that attended them, are what distinguish us from all other religions and from any other people with good intent.

The Prophet Joseph Smith went into the woods near his family home to offer his first vocal prayer to God. He said: “I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

From that day forward the heavens were open again. Joseph learned line upon line, precept upon precept. He studied the scriptures, and he communed with angels. Apostles and prophets from ancient times came to confer on him sacred priesthood authority and keys. Heavenly messengers taught him the ordinances of everlasting life and the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Revelation flowed from on high.

I testify that today the keys of the kingdom of God are on earth and that they are held by Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. The President of the Church, who is the senior Apostle, holds all the keys necessary to preside over all the organizational and ordinance work of the Church. President Thomas S. Monson has this authority today. He stands as our prophet, the most recent in an unbroken succession of prophets and apostles from Joseph Smith to our own day.

Having the fulness of the gospel should not lead any of us to feel arrogant or harbor a holier-than-thou attitude. We should simply be grateful with all our heart for the privilege to live in the time of the Restoration and to bring truth and eternal blessings to our brothers and sisters.

Therefore, be humble and testify of the Restoration of the gospel and of Joseph Smith as a true prophet of God. Joyfully live the gospel and be true to the covenants and commandments our loving Heavenly Father has given us.

Be courageous. Have faith. Do not fear. Trust the Lord. **NE**

From an address delivered at a seminar for new mission presidents on July 27, 2006.