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# *The Ongoing* RESTORA



*The Restoration began in the  
Sacred Grove 200 years ago and  
continues today—and you and I  
can be part of it.*

RESTORATION OF THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, BY WALTER RANE



# TION

This is a wonderful and exciting time to be on earth. We have the blessing of participating in great events happening in the dispensation of the fulness of times, preparatory to the Lord's Second Coming.<sup>1</sup> We get to not only watch these magnificent events unfold but also be part of them.<sup>2</sup>

We sometimes talk of the Restoration of the gospel as if it happened all at once. Two hundred years ago, the First Vision began the process, but the Restoration did not, of course, end there. The Lord's work through Joseph Smith and his associates proceeded with translating the Book of Mormon, restoring the priesthood, organizing the Church, sending forth missionaries, building temples, organizing the Relief Society, and so forth. These Restoration events started in 1820 and

continued throughout Joseph Smith's life.

As wonderful as the things are that God revealed through Joseph Smith, the Restoration was not completed in Joseph's lifetime. Through prophets after him we have received such things as the ongoing development of temple work; additional scriptures; the translation of scripture into many languages; the taking of the gospel throughout the world; the organization of Sunday School, Young Women, Primary, and priesthood quorums; and numerous adjustments to Church organization and procedure.

"We're witnesses to a process of restoration," President Russell M. Nelson has said. "If you think the Church has been fully restored, you're just seeing the beginning. There is much more to come. . . . Wait till next year. And then

THE DESIRES OF MY HEART (FIRST VISION), BY WALTER RANE

*God has given us  
the magnificent  
opportunity to  
play vital roles  
in this work.*

*Early missionary Samuel Smith  
sharing a Book of Mormon*



the next year. Eat your vitamin pills. Get your rest. It's going to be exciting.”<sup>3</sup>

Consistent with President Nelson's declaration that the Restoration is continuing, we have seen many significant adjustments in the Church since he became its President. Among those are the restructuring of priesthood quorums, ministering replacing home and visiting teaching, and the institution of a home-centered, Church-supported way of studying the gospel.<sup>4</sup> More adjustments have happened since then, and more will be coming.

#### **An Example in West Africa**

My testimony of the ongoing nature of the Restoration was impacted by the five years that I spent serving in the Africa West Area Presidency. Since I was a young man, I have

1,000 people who used the Book of Mormon and other Church materials in their church services. They prayed for the day that the Church would come to Ghana. He joined with other young men traveling around Ghana and teaching the gospel as found in our materials. Once missionaries arrived in 1978, he was baptized on the first day that Latter-day Saint baptisms were performed in Ghana.

Early in Fred's time as a member, he attended the funeral of a relative who was a tribal chief. There he found out that the family plan was to make him the new chief. Knowing that such a position would cause him to do things contrary to his gospel beliefs, he sped away after the burial and turned his back on a position that would have brought him prominence and wealth.

had a testimony of the gospel. But living in Africa, I associated with some of the first West Africans to accept the gospel. I also saw the Church spreading rapidly across the continent, with hundreds of wards and stakes being formed, temples and meetinghouses being filled to overflowing with faithful members, and good women and men embracing, with all of their hearts, the restored gospel. Before my eyes I saw the fulfillment of Joseph Smith's prophecy that the Church “will fill the world.”<sup>5</sup>

Two such faithful members, James Ewudzie and Frederick Antwi, assisted me one day in the Accra Ghana Temple. Several years before Latter-day Saint missionaries arrived in Ghana, James had been part of a group of about

Once the Accra Temple was dedicated, both James and Fred traveled over four hours, one way, every week so that they could be temple workers. As I performed ordinances with them, I was overcome with the sense of history that surrounded me. Realizing the Church history in Africa that the two of them represented, I felt like it was akin to having John Taylor or Wilford Woodruff or other early members of the Church with me doing those ordinances.

What I saw, experienced, and felt in West Africa was being part of what the Lord told Enoch would happen: “And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; . . . and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the

*Fred Antwi, a pioneer member  
of the Church in Ghana*



four quarters of the earth” (Moses 7:62).

I saw righteousness and truth sweeping across the African continent and the elect being gathered from that part of the world. My testimony of the Restoration was enhanced because I saw that important part of the Restoration happening before my eyes.

I also saw something else about the continuing Restoration: a vibrant faith and spiritual energy among the African members. I have heard Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles say, “Kirtland [where Latter-day Saints lived in the 1830s] is not just in Ohio. It is also in Africa.” Many people are joining the Church in Africa based on their powerful personal spiritual experiences. Those new members bring spiritual energy and a need for further gospel learning. For them the Restoration is continuing in a personal sense. As they learn more and more about the Church, the truths of the gospel continue to unfold to their view. The same is true of all of us as we continue to expand our gospel knowledge.

By making and keeping covenants, we not only prepare ourselves for eternal life, but we also help prepare and strengthen what the Lord calls “my covenant people” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:36). We make covenants with God and become part of His covenant people through baptism, confirmation, the sacrament, the Melchizedek Priesthood, and temple ordinances.

### **A second way that we can participate in the ongoing Restoration is by fulfilling**

*Youth lining up to enter the Accra Ghana Temple*



### **Three Ways to Help in the Ongoing Restoration**

God has given us the magnificent opportunity to play vital roles in this work. The Lord said that the “body [of the Church] hath need of every member” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:110). All members of the Church have the blessing of participating in this continuing Restoration. How do we do so?

**One way that we participate is by making and keeping sacred covenants.** Ordinances, including temple ordinances, do not have a purpose unless people actually make and then keep the covenants associated with those ordinances. Sister Bonnie Parkin, former Relief Society General President, has taught, “Making covenants is the expression of a willing heart; keeping covenants, the expression of a faithful heart.”<sup>6</sup>

**the callings and assignments that we receive.** That is how the Church moves forward. Devoted teachers teach the gospel to children, youth, and adults. Ministering sisters and brothers care for the individual members of the Church. Presidencies and bishoprics give guidance to stakes, districts, wards, branches, quorums, organizations, classes, and groups. Youth leaders care for young women and young men. Clerks and secretaries record essential information that is then recorded in heaven, and a host of others perform essential roles in preparing people for eternal life and the Second Coming of the Savior.

**A third way that we can participate in the Restoration is by helping to gather Israel.** From the earliest days of the Restoration, this has been a key part of the

*As taught by President Nelson, we have the opportunity and duty to assist in the gathering that happens on both sides of the veil.*

work. As taught by President Nelson, we have the opportunity and duty to assist in the gathering that happens on both sides of the veil. In his closing message in his first general conference as President of the Church, President Nelson succinctly stated, “Our message to the world is simple and sincere: we invite all of God’s children on both sides of the veil to come unto their Savior, receive the blessings of the holy temple, have enduring joy, and qualify for eternal life.”<sup>7</sup>

Gathering Israel on this side of the veil means missionary work. All of us who can serve full-time missions should carefully consider that opportunity. I count it as a great blessing that I was able to serve a mission in Italy at a time when the Church was very young there. Our branches met in rented halls, and we hoped that someday stakes and wards might exist there. I watched brave pioneers come into the Church and lay the foundation for the gathering of Israel in that great land.

they raised four children, all of whom served missions and have continued since to serve in the Church.

Agnese and Sebastiano also served a mission, with Sebastiano as mission president. When I served a second mission in Italy, 25 years after the first, I was able to see what the Carusos and other pioneers had done to expand the kingdom of God there. My missionaries and I worked to build the Church, dreaming that someday a temple might be built in Italy. Imagine my joy in the fact that

*Elder and Sister Curtis with some members of the Caruso family*



One of these was Agnese Galdiolo. We all felt the Spirit powerfully as she was taught the missionary lessons. But, even feeling that Spirit, she knew that her family would be strongly opposed to her being baptized. At a certain point, however, filled with the Spirit, she agreed to be baptized. But she changed her mind the morning of her scheduled baptism. She came early to the rented hall where she was to be baptized to tell us that because of family pressure, she could not do it.

Before leaving, she agreed that we could talk for a few minutes. We went to a classroom where we suggested that we pray together. After we had knelt, we asked her to say the prayer. After the prayer she stood up in tears and said, “All right, I will be baptized.” And a few minutes later she was. The next year she married Sebastiano Caruso, and

we now have the Rome Italy Temple.

There are few joys that can compare with missionary joy. What a great blessing to be born at a time when we can joyously participate in the ongoing Restoration by helping to gather Israel!

Missionary joy, of course, is felt not only by full-time missionaries. Each of us can assist in the conversion or activation of our sisters and brothers by working hand in hand with the full-time missionaries. We have the opportunity to gather Israel by inviting others to come and see and by fellowshipping those being taught.

**It is by temple and family history work that we help gather Israel on the other side of the veil.** For years it has been our sacred responsibility to do this work. Before Joseph Smith’s death, the Saints performed

*At Agnese Galdiolo’s baptism*



Eliza R. Snow, early Relief Society leader



baptisms for the dead, and a few received their endowments and sealings. With the completion of the Nauvoo Temple, endowments for the living began in earnest. Endowments and sealings for ancestors also began in temples in Utah.

Eliza R. Snow, a key participant in that restorative process, understood the importance of that part of the Restoration. She spent much time in the endowment house, assisting with ordinances there.<sup>8</sup> During one Relief Society visit in 1869, she taught her sisters, “I have been reflecting on the great work we have to perform, even in helping the salvation of the living and the dead. We want to be . . . fit companions of the Gods and Holy Ones.”<sup>9</sup>

And, of course, the availability of temple ordinances has expanded dramatically with

world began” (Doctrine and Covenants 27:6). That restoration has continued to the present as God “does now reveal” and “will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9). I am deeply grateful that we get to participate in this ongoing Restoration. ■

*“If you think the Church has been fully restored, you’re just seeing the beginning. There is much more to come.”*

*—President Nelson*

the construction of many temples around the world, with more to come.

With the tools we now have at our disposal, temple and family history work can be a regular part of our participation in the ongoing Restoration. I have been interested and involved in family history work for years, but online tools have greatly enhanced my success in taking family names to the temple. I have sacred memories of sitting at a table in our apartment in Ghana and finding names of my European ancestors that my wife and I could take to the Accra Ghana Temple. That joyous opportunity has followed us to other places that we have been sent.

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, God began the process of “bringing to pass the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the

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#### NOTES

1. See Ephesians 1:10; Doctrine and Covenants 27:13.
2. See Daniel 2:35–45; Doctrine and Covenants 65.
3. Russell M. Nelson, in “Latter-day Saint Prophet, Wife and Apostle Share Insights of Global Ministry,” Oct. 30, 2018, newsroom.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
4. See “Inspired Direction,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 121.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 137.
6. Bonnie D. Parkin, “With Holiness of Heart,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 103.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Let Us All Press On,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 118–19. Echoing that thought, President Nelson said in general conference a year later: “May we dedicate and rededicate our lives to serving God and His children—on both sides of the veil” (“Closing Remarks,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 112).
8. The endowment house was built on Temple Square while the Salt Lake Temple was being built. Dedicated in 1855, the endowment house was used for temple ordinances until 1889.
9. Eliza R. Snow, address to Lehi Ward Relief Society, Oct. 27, 1869, Relief Society Minute Book, 1868–79, Church History Library, 26–27.