

ELDER MILTON R. HUNTER
Of the First Council of the Seventy

My dear brethren and sisters, I am very grateful for the privilege of once again bearing witness to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

On a certain occasion I had a conversation with Dr. Frederick L. Paxson, chairman of the History Department at the University of California and one of America's outstanding historians. This conversation suggests God's method of transmitting light and knowledge to his children here on earth, and so I shall use it as the basis of my talk today.

Historian Appraises Brigham Young

Dr. Paxson stated that it was his opinion that Brigham Young was perhaps the greatest colonizer that the world had ever known. He explained that after founding Salt Lake City, Brigham Young sent settlers in every direction from that center, resulting in colonizing an expansive desert country. Dr. Paxson stressed the point that wherever President Young told his followers to go, they went without any hesitation. Then he gave his reasons to account for Brigham's outstanding success as a colonizer.

"Brigham Young," so he explained, "was one of those rare individuals blessed with an exceedingly forceful personality. He was a man naturally endowed with unusual powers of leadership. Through those natural powers of leadership and as a result of his unusual forceful personality, he was able to completely dominate the lives of the Latter-day Saints. Thus his followers always did Brigham's bidings."

After completing his explanation, Dr. Paxson said to me, "Am I not correct, Mr. Hunter, in my appraisal of Brigham Young, and are not these the reasons why he was so successful in colonizing such a vast empire in the great West?"

I replied: "No, Dr. Paxson, in my opinion the reasons you gave are not the most vital factors which caused

the Mormon leader to do such an outstanding job as a colonizer. I do agree that he possessed the powers of personality and leadership that you described, but there is another factor far more important than anything that you mentioned which completely dominated the lives of Brigham Young and his people.

Basis of Brigham Young's Power

"The supreme reason Brigham Young and all the Saints migrated to Utah was that each of them had in his heart a burning testimony of the truthfulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Each one accepted without any mental reservation the reality of the existence of God the Father and Christ the Son and felt a close personal relationship to them. It was a positive fact to each Latter-day Saint that the Eternal Father and his Only Begotten Son had appeared to Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove, and also that other heavenly beings had appeared to the Prophet and given to him the priesthood through which he had organized the true Church of Jesus Christ. They firmly maintained that all the principles and ordinances of the gospel which had been on earth in former dispensations were revealed from heaven to the Prophet Joseph. Thus, Brigham Young and his followers maintained that Joseph had been God's mouthpiece here upon the earth—his holy prophet, seer, and revelator—just as literally as had any of the Old Testament prophets.

"Following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, the members of the Church who migrated to Utah maintained that all the power and authority from God which had been brought by heavenly beings to Joseph had been bestowed upon his successor, Brigham Young. The Saints were positive that their pioneer leader was now God's holy anointed prophet, seer, and revelator. His word was accepted, therefore, as the word and the will of

the Lord. The Saints firmly believed that they with Brigham were building the kingdom of God under divine direction from heaven.

"Thus, Dr. Paxson," I concluded, "an individual testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ possessed by each Latter-day Saint was actually the dynamic force which caused Brigham Young and his followers to withstand mob violence and terrible persecutions in the East, to leave their homes and comforts of life, and to willingly suffer untold hardships, hunger, disease, and—for many of them—death, and endure numerous other difficulties encountered in making more than a thousand miles' trek through the wilderness to their promised land. Their positive, dynamic testimonies caused thousands of people to follow Brigham Young's suggestions, obey his instructions and commands, and successfully make 'the desert . . . blossom as the rose.'" (Isa. 35:1.)

Testimony of the Gospel

My brethren and sisters, this power, known as testimony of the gospel, is one of the most dynamic forces in the world when it comes into a person's heart. It is that divine power which lights up men's souls and gives them deep feelings, indescribable inward peace, unbounded joy, and great understanding. Yes, it endows them even with hidden treasures of knowledge. It guides them back to God. Paul, the ancient apostle, tells us from what source mortals get their testimonies. He wrote:

"For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. . . .

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:11, 14.)

Spiritual, Not Physical, Senses

From Paul's statement it is evident that people do not obtain their testi-

monies through their physical senses but through their spiritual senses. Thus Brigham Young and his people obtained their knowledge directly from God, receiving it through their spiritual senses, and so a testimony can be termed spiritual knowledge. Those who have received strong testimonies feel that spiritual knowledge may be even more real than knowledge gained through the physical senses. A statement made by Brigham Young illustrates his personal conviction regarding this matter. To quote:

"Men talk about what has been accomplished under my direction, and attribute it to my wisdom and ability; but it is all by the power of God, and by intelligence received from him. . . . What I know concerning God, concerning the earth, concerning government, I received from the heavens, not alone through my natural ability, and I give God the glory and the praise." (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1926 ed., p. 664.)

Channel of Spiritual Gifts

The Holy Ghost is the medium through which God operates in giving to men revelations, testimonies of the gospel, and all other spiritual gifts. Perhaps you recall that shortly before his death, Jesus said to his apostles:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments.

"And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; . . .

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:15-16, 26.)

The Lord declared that ". . . the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, . . . knoweth all things." (D&C 35:19.) His principal function is to bear witness, or testimony, to the hearts of righteous people. Throughout all ages the Holy Ghost has borne witness of ". . . the Eternal God, and the Messiah who is the Lamb of God. . . ." (1 Nephi 12:18; D&C 20:27.) It is a fact of spe-

Saturday, October 2

Second Day

cial significance that the Holy Ghost bears testimony to the hearts of men that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. Paul definitely declared that ". . . no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. 12:3.)

The Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost is the member of the Godhead through which both prophecy and revelation operate. For example, Peter wrote: ". . . prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:21.) John the Revelator declared that ". . . the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10.) In the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations. The Holy Ghost is a revealer." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 328.) The Lord has declared that ". . . the Holy Ghost . . . manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men." (D&C 18:18.) In fact, ". . . the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, . . . showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom." (*Ibid.*, 39:6; 8:2.)

It is a fact that the gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed upon each baptized person when he is confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, but the Holy Ghost will not abide with that person if he is not righteous and pure in heart. A person who has a powerful testimony—even a dynamic, compelling testimony—can easily lose it. How? Through committing sins and not repenting. Then ". . . the heavens withdraw themselves; [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 121:37.) "And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts." (*Ibid.*, 1:33.)

On the other hand, a testimony grows through a person's humility, willingness to submit to God's will, and continuous obedience. The more

completely one conforms his life to the teachings of the Master, the greater will be his testimony and the manifestations of the gift of the Spirit. Jesus declared:

"And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, . . ." (3 Nephi 9:20.)

Factors of Testimony

The Savior has proclaimed what we might regard as a scientific pattern which must be followed if one attains a testimony and retains it. First, he must have a strong desire to gain a testimony. Second, he must study the holy scriptures prayerfully and with an open mind. You recall that the Master declared: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39; D&C 1:37.) Third, a person must render obedience to God's commandments. Jesus made this fact clear. He said: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:16-17.) And fourth, he must pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ and sincerely ask for a testimony. By doing these things a person receives a testimony that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true.

In order to gain a thorough understanding of what it means to have the Holy Ghost bear witness to one's heart, a person must have that experience. One who has done so knows that the power of the Holy Ghost may come to an individual in varying degrees. On most occasions it bears witness to one quite gently, but there may be a few occasions in one's life when that divine power enters his body with such overwhelming force that he feels as if it might consume his flesh, such as was experienced by the ancient apostles on the day of Pentecost and by Heber C. Kimball at his baptism and confirmation. Brother Kimball wrote: ". . . I received the Holy Ghost, as the disciples did in ancient days,

which was like consuming fire. . . . it seemed as though my body would consume away." (*Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 1945 ed., p. 22.)

On these rare and marvelous occasions, one feels the power of the Holy Ghost enter his body as if it were a wave of electricity. While he is under that spiritual influence, he experiences an indescribable joy throughout his whole being. Yes, he feels a love for everybody and everything far surpassing his natural ability to feel love and joy on other occasions. An experience of this kind is more dynamic, more powerful, and more awe-inspiring than any sensation that could be received through the physical senses. Such a dynamic experience leaves a lasting impression on the recipient that time does not dim and that he can never deny.

For example, if this powerful witness from the Holy Ghost comes to bear testimony of the divine nature and truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, the person who has had that witness borne to his heart will know beyond a shadow of doubt, just as surely as he knows that he is alive, that the Book of Mormon is true—that it is the word of God.

Moroni's Promise

When Moroni was finishing the Nephite records preparatory to hiding them for future generations, he gave us the key to receiving a testimony. He wrote:

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things

are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things." (Moroni 10:4-5.)

This dynamic witness has come to me, as it has to thousands of other people who have followed Moroni's injunction. As a result of a gift from God through the power of the Holy Ghost, I know as positively as I know any other fact with which I am thoroughly acquainted that the Book of Mormon is true. It is a divine and sacred record of the history and religion of the ancient Americans. This knowledge is so thoroughly entrenched in my entire being that with all my heart, strength, and might I bear testimony to the divine authenticity of this holy book.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ, let us build, sustain, and retain our testimonies by living ". . . by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God." (D&C 84:44.) And then our names shall be ". . . written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27), and we shall be ". . . sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise . . ." (D&C 132:26) to rise in the resurrection of the just to be crowned with glory, exaltation, and eternal life.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner:

Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

ELDER LeGRAND RICHARDS *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My heart is full of gratitude to my Father in heaven for the privilege of attending this great conference with you, my brethren and sisters, and those who have attended the other sessions of the conference. And I have rejoiced in the testimonies and the messages of

all of my brethren who have spoken prior to my talk, and particularly commencing with that masterful address, the keynote to the conference, delivered by President McKay yesterday morning. I think that was no less than a miracle. Those of us who have been