

President Gordon B. Hinckley

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Gordon B. Hinckley as a Counselor in the First Presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so manifest it.

It is also proposed that we sustain Elder Neal A. Maxwell as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so manifest it.

It is also proposed that we sustain Elder G. Homer Durham as one of the Presidents of the First Quorum of the

Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so manifest it.

With the exception of these Brethren whom we have just sustained, there have been no other changes in the General Authorities since the last conference. It is proposed, therefore, that we sustain all of the General Authorities and general officers of the Church as at present constituted.

Those in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed by the same sign.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

I suppose there has never been a more generous outpouring of love than that expressed in behalf of President Kimball, our prophet. Unitedly as a people with one heart and one voice we give thanks to the Lord for his blessings and pray for his continued recovery.

We pray also for Elders G. Homer Durham and Theodore M. Burton, who likewise are in the hospital and acknowledge the absence of Elder Burton Howard, who is presiding over the mission in Uruguay.

My brethren and sisters, thank you for your faithful service in behalf of our Father's children wherever you live. Thank you for the efforts you have made in coming here. I pray that when we separate on the morrow, we all will feel that we have been fed the bread of life. I express the same prayer in behalf of those who will receive the conference in their homes.

I should like to voice in your behalf a word of appreciation to those who make widely available the facilities of radio, television, and cable. It is a service greatly appreciated by hundreds of thousands.

Gifts of science

And now we are expanding the miracle of satellite transmission in behalf of the membership of the Church throughout the United States. With completion of a new uplink facility, tucked away in the hills a few miles to the north of us, the sounds and the sights of this conference are beamed to a transponder 22,300 miles above the equator. There they are amplified and then reflected back to receiving antennas installed in stake centers in various parts of the nation. These centers are now few, but during the next eighteen months these pioneer installations will be expanded to four or five hundred, making it possible for most of the membership of the Church in the United States, either in their homes through conventional radio, television, or cable, or through gatherings in stake centers, to participate in these general conferences.

With the growth of the Church, we likely could never build a hall large enough to accommodate all who would wish to assemble in one place. Nor would accelerating travel costs

make possible their coming. The gifts of science have provided a more convenient way. We are confident that as the work of the Lord expands, he will inspire men to develop the means whereby the membership of the Church, wherever they may be, can be counseled in an intimate and personal way by his chosen prophet. Communication is the sinew that binds the Church as one great family. Between those facilities which are now available and those which are on the horizon, we shall be able to converse one with another according to the needs and circumstances of the time.

Eventful years in the Church

Now, I hope you will pardon my speaking in a personal vein for three or four minutes. It was twenty years ago, at the October conference, that I was sustained a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Previously, for two and a half years, I had served as an Assistant to the Twelve. These have been eventful years, during which four great and inspired men have presided over the Church—David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Spencer W. Kimball. They have been years in which the Church has moved out across the world in a remarkable way. They have been years in which millions of members have been added. They have also been years in which strong voices have been raised against us. We have been criticized, but this criticism has in no way deterred the progress of the work. In fact, it has brought many to our defense and our support, and in some instances it has added to our numbers.

For me personally, these have been challenging years, filled with worrisome responsibility and satisfying experience. Mine has been the opportunity to meet with the Saints over the world. I have been in your homes in many parts of the earth, and I wish to thank you for your kindness and hospitality. I have been in your

meetings and listened to your declarations of faith and your expressions of testimony. I have wept with some in your sorrow and rejoiced with many in your accomplishments. My faith has grown, my knowledge has broadened, my love for our Father's children has strengthened wherever I have gone.

In recent months I have had the opportunity of traveling in the People's Republic of China and in the nations of eastern Europe, including Russia. My heart has been touched by the warmth of good people wherever I have gone. All are children of our Father in Heaven. True, there are vast chasms of political and ideological differences. But innately people are the same. They are all sons and daughters of God. They have within their hearts basically the same longings. Husbands love their wives, and wives their husbands. Parents love their children, and children their parents. Their minds respond to the same truths if they are given opportunity to hear them. Speaking of the people generally, they desire peace and not war. They desire brotherhood and not conflict. They desire truth and not propaganda. Ours is a great and compelling responsibility, to teach the everlasting gospel to the peoples of the earth. Many gates are now closed against us. But I am convinced that the Lord in his own time will open them, provided we constantly seek and pray for such openings and are prepared to take advantage of them. I do not know specifically the time frame of the Lord's work, but I do know that we must be anxiously engaged.

During the twenty years and more that I have served as a General Authority, I have seen in a very personal and intimate way a miraculous opening and strengthening of the work in some of the great nations of Asia. We now have well over a hundred thousand members with strong wards and stakes in lands where only twenty-five years ago we scarcely dreamed of entering. The Lord, moving in his mysterious

way, has unlocked those doors and touched the hearts of the people. That process is at work today in other lands. I am convinced of this, although the progress may appear almost imperceptible.

Looking back over these twenty years, I am grateful for the great development of the work of the Lord.

“Strengthen your brethren”

And now a new assignment has come. I appreciate the confidence of President Kimball, of Presidents Tanner and Romney, as well as that of my Brethren of the Twelve, the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. My only desire is to serve with loyalty wherever I am called. I thank the many of you who have been gracious and generous in your expressions. This sacred calling has made me aware of my weaknesses. If I have offended at any time, I apologize and hope you will forgive me. Whether this assignment be lengthy or brief, I pledge my best effort, given with love and faith.

I plead for understanding among our people, for a spirit of tolerance toward one another, and for forgiveness. All of us have far too much to do to waste our time and energies in criticism, faultfinding, or the abuse of others. The Lord has commanded this people, saying: “Strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings.” This is the commandment, stated unequivocally; and then follows this marvelous promise: “And behold, and lo, I am with you to bless you and deliver you forever.” (D&C 108: 7-8.)

“Faith is essence of true religion”

Now, if I may be guided by the Spirit, I should like to talk about another matter. There recently spoke in this city a prominent journalist from the East. I did not hear him, but I read the newspaper reports of his remarks.

He is quoted as having said, “Certitude is the enemy of religion.” The words attributed to him have stirred within me much reflection. Certitude, which I define as complete and total assurance, is not the enemy of religion. It is of its very essence.

Certitude is certainty. It is conviction. It is the power of faith that approaches knowledge—yes, that even becomes knowledge. It evokes enthusiasm, and there is no asset comparable to enthusiasm in overcoming opposition, prejudice, and indifference.

Great buildings were never constructed on uncertain foundations. Great causes were never brought to success by vacillating leaders. The gospel was never expounded to the convincing of others without certainty. Faith, which is of the very essence of personal conviction, has always been, and always must be, at the root of religious practice and endeavor.

Certitude in former times

There was no uncertainty in Peter’s mind when the Lord asked him, “Whom say ye that I am?”

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matt. 16: 15-16.)

Nor was there any doubt on the part of Peter when the Lord taught the multitude in Capernaum, declaring himself to be the bread of life. Many of his disciples, who would not accept his teaching, “went back, and walked no more with him.

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?”

“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

“And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6: 66-69.)

Following the death of the Savior, would his Apostles have carried on, teaching his doctrine, even giving their lives in the most painful of cir-

cumstances, if there were any uncertainty concerning him whom they represented and whose doctrine they taught? There was no lack of certitude on the part of Paul after he had seen a light and heard a voice while en route to Damascus to persecute the Christians. For more than three decades after that, he devoted his time, his strength, his life to the spreading of the gospel of the resurrected Lord. Without regard for personal comfort or safety, he traveled over the known world of his time, declaring that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38-39.)

Executed in Rome, Paul sealed with his death his final testimony of his conviction of the divine sonship of Jesus Christ.

So it was with the early Christians, thousands upon thousands of them, who suffered imprisonment, torture, and death rather than recant their stated beliefs in the life and resurrection of the Son of God.

Would there ever have been a Reformation without the certitude that drove with boldness such giants as Luther, Huss, Zwingli, and others of their kind?

Certitude in modern times

As it was anciently, so has it been in modern times. Without certitude on the parts of believers, a religious cause becomes soft, without muscle, without the driving force that would broaden its influence and capture the hearts and affections of men and women. Theology may be argued over, but personal testimony, coupled with performance, cannot be refuted. This gospel dispensation, of which we are the beneficiaries, opened with a glorious vision in which the Father and the Son ap-

peared to the boy Joseph Smith. Having had that experience, the boy recounted it to one of the preachers of the community. He treated the account "with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil, that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days." (JS—H 1:21.)

Others took up the cry against him. He became the object of severe persecution. But, he said, and note these words: "I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it." (JS—H 1:25.)

There is no lack of certitude in that statement. For Joseph Smith that experience was as real as the warmth of the sun at noonday. He never flagged nor wavered in his conviction. Listen to his later testimony of the risen Lord:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God." (D&C 76:22-24.)

So certain was he of the cause he led, so sure of his divinely-given calling, that he placed them above the

value of his own life. With prescient knowledge of his forthcoming death, he surrendered himself to those who would deliver him defenseless into the hands of a mob. He sealed his testimony with his life's blood.

It was so with his followers. One will find no evidence, not a scintilla of it, that certitude was the enemy of religion in their lives and actions. Time after time they left their comfortable homes, first in New York, then in Ohio and Missouri, later in Illinois; and even after reaching this valley many left again to plant colonies over a vast area of the West. Why? Because of their faith in the cause of which they were a part.

Many died in those long and difficult journeys, the victims of disease, exposure to the elements, and the brutal attacks of their enemies. Some six thousand lie buried somewhere between the Missouri River and this valley. Their love for the truth meant more to them than did life itself.

It has been thus ever since. I wrote these beautiful words as President David O. McKay spoke them to a small group some years ago. Said he:

"As absolute as the certainty that you have in your hearts that tonight will be followed by dawn tomorrow morning, so is my assurance that Jesus Christ is the Savior of mankind, the light that will dispel the darkness of the world, through the gospel restored by direct revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith."

Our beloved President Spencer W. Kimball has said: "I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

"He is my friend, my Savior, my Lord, my God." (ENSIGN, Nov. 1978, p. 73.)

Certitude of truth of this work

It is that kind of certitude that has moved this Church forward in the face of persecution, ridicule, sacrifice of

fortune, the leaving of loved ones to travel to distant lands to carry the gospel message. That conviction motivates today as it has done from the beginning of this work. Faith in the hearts of millions that this cause is true, that God is our Eternal Father, and that Jesus is the Christ, must ever be the great motivating force in our lives.

We have today some thirty thousand missionaries in the field at a cost of millions to their families. Why do they do it? Because of their conviction of the truth of this work. The membership of the Church is now approaching five million. What is the reason for this phenomenal growth? It is because certainty comes into the hearts of hundreds of thousands of converts each year, converts who are touched by the power of the Holy Ghost. We have a great functioning and effective welfare program. Those who view it marvel at it. It works only because of the faith of those who participate in it.

With the growth of the Church we must build new houses of worship, many hundreds of them. They are costly. But the people give of their means, not only for this purpose, but in the regular and faithful payment of their tithes, because of the certitude of the truth of this work.

By the Spirit, results are certain and testimony sure

The marvelous and wonderful thing is that any individual who desires to know the truth may receive that conviction. The Lord himself gave the formula when he said, "He that doeth the will of the Father shall know of the doctrine, whether I speak of God or whether I speak of myself." (See John 7:17.)

It will take study of the word of God. It will take prayer and anxious seeking of the source of all truth. It will take living the gospel, an experiment, if you please, in following the

teachings. I do not hesitate to promise, because I know from personal experience, that out of all of this will come, by the power of the Holy Ghost, a conviction, a testimony, a certain knowledge.

People of the world seem unable to believe it, so many of them. What they do not realize is that the things of God are understood only by the Spirit of God. There must be effort. There must be humility. There must be prayer. But the results are certain and the testimony is sure.

If our people, as individuals, ever lose that certitude, the Church will dwindle as so many others have. I have no fear of that. I am confident that an ever-enlarging membership will seek for and find that personal conviction which we call testimony, which comes by the power of the Holy Ghost, and which can weather the storms of adversity.

To those who vacillate, who equivocate, who qualify their assertions with uncertainty when speaking of the things of God, these words from the book of Revelation are appropriate:

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I

will spue thee out of my mouth." (Rev. 3:15-16.)

My brethren and sisters, as we begin this great conference, I not only invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you but with certitude give you my witness of the truth. I know that God our Eternal Father lives. I know that. I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind, the author of our salvation. I know that this work of which we are a part is the work of God; that this is the Church of Jesus Christ. Great is our opportunity for service therein and strong and certain is our faith concerning it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd" without announcement.

President Tanner

President Gordon B. Hinckley has just spoken to us, and the Choir has sung "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a new member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

My brothers and sisters: I publicly express my deep gratitude to the Lord, to our remarkable and beloved President Kimball, and to his counselors for my call to the Twelve—among whom I shall be the least, long after being the last so ordained.

I express deep love and appreciation to my wife, who is splendid in every way; to my goodly and gracious parents and sisters; to my

children, who are committed to the kingdom and who have been wise enough to have married committed eternal partners.

Divine Redeemer, incomparable

I realize that my life, of course, must constitute my real acceptance of the apostolic charge. Even so, this poor tongue now seeks to speak in