

### President Benson

Sister Elaine Cannon, released this morning as general president of the Young women, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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### President Benson

Elder William Grant Bangerter, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Sister Barbara B. Smith, who was released this morning as general president of the Relief Society.

## Elder William Grant Bangerter

President Kimball, I know that I echo the feelings of everyone here in telling you that we love you, as you have so often told us.

### Coming through the mists

I believe I have a good subject, since so many have already used it today. I would like to say something about coming through the mists.

As I approach this assignment, I am brought back to some guidelines, an expression made years ago by President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., who said:

"There are, for the Church and for each and all of its members, two prime things which may not be overlooked, forgotten, shaded, or discarded:

"First: That Jesus Christ is the Son of God. . . .

"Second . . . : That the Father and the Son actually . . . appeared to the Prophet Joseph in a vision . . . ; that the Gospel and the holy Priesthood . . . were . . . restored to the earth from which they were lost by the apostasy of the Primitive Church" ("The Charted Course of the Church in Education," an address delivered in Aspen Grove, Utah, 8 Aug. 1938, p. 3).

I testify that these stipulations are true because this knowledge has been

revealed to me by the unquestionable Spirit of God.

### Warning against unrighteousness

In a time described in the scriptures as being filled with "wickedness and vengeance" (Moses 7:60), the First Presidency has sent out the special message to the Church in our stake conferences: "Staying on the strait and narrow path by keeping our covenants."

For us who claim leadership through prophets called of God, it is a good time to pay attention. For those who ignore the commandments, you may not receive many other warnings, "for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13).

The warning is against unrighteousness. That means sin and wickedness. This is defined by Peter as if he were speaking of this present time. He speaks of "denying the Lord," of covetousness to "make merchandise of you," of the example of the iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrhah, and of "the filthy conversation of the wicked, . . . having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin" (2 Peter 2:1, 3, 6, 7, 14).

### Displays of wickedness

A moment's reflection on the displays in the media and in advertising, the inducement to use drugs, alcohol, and so forth, makes it very plain that for the sake of making money there is an attempt to buy or sell our souls, making "merchandise of you."

Newspaper articles and public expressions often carry the "filthy conversation of the wicked" (2 Peter 2:7). We call it what it is: "A wicked and adulterous generation."

We are indeed constantly bombarded by a display of wickedness as it flashes before us, sometimes in ways that we cannot avoid.

Our society maintains the fiction that the display of such things as adultery, pornography, nudity, and licentiousness should be kept from the young people. Of course it should, but to set an age limit is pure hypocrisy. Perhaps greater corruption is being administered to the older and married generation. They are those who commit the adulteries. They are those who destroy the homes and violate the sanctity of families. The married ones obtain the divorces, break the covenants, cheat their spouses, and become dishonest in their commitments.

And, of course, in doing these wicked things they suggest that it is not so bad anymore. Since so much of the world accepts these actions, if we resist them or speak out against them, we will be scoffed at. We will be called prudish, Victorian, puritan, and self-righteous, as if we had become the sinners. We will be accused of being evil-minded in our failure to appreciate the "beauty and naturalness" of the human body.

### Reaching out to boy in prison

A vivid example of the position of members of the Church in relation to the world was portrayed to us one evening in our sacrament meeting, now many years ago, when a man named Brother Smith came to speak. He told

us of his experience in working to rehabilitate men in the state penitentiary. A mother had asked him to reach out to her boy who was in prison.

In approaching the young man, Brother Smith was rudely rebuffed: "Leave me alone," was the tone. However, Brother Smith noticed a rather crude painting in the prison one day and on inquiry learned that this young man had drawn it. This inspired a new approach:

"Did you paint that picture?"

"Yes, I did it."

"I was impressed with it. I wonder if you would paint something for me."

"I don't know. What picture do you want?"

"I have never seen it," said Brother Smith. "I have only read about it."

"Where is it?" inquired the young man.

"It is here in this book," responded Brother Smith. "The Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi, chapter 8. Will you read it and see if you can see the picture?"

Later Brother Smith inquired if the young man had read it.

"Yes, I read it," he said.

"Did you see the picture?"

"Yes, I saw it."

"Will you paint it for me?"

"I don't know if I will or not."

Brother Smith then obtained the necessary materials for painting a picture and presented them to the young man, who for the first time responded with warmth and appreciation to be able to use good equipment, and he painted the picture. Brother Smith brought it with him to our sacrament meeting, and so I have seen it. It is, of course, the picture of Lehi's dream.

### A vivid warning

Now, will you try to see the picture in your own imagination? All you who have read 1 Nephi, chapter 8, will recall the scene. If you have not read it, I wish you would do so and get the feeling and the vision of this picture.

The description is as follows: First, Lehi wandering through a dreary waste, then coming to a spacious field; the tree with the most desirable fruit to be happy, the love of God; Lehi's desire to share the fruit with his family; the rebellion of two of his sons; the pressing forward of many people to receive the fruit; the mists of darkness, which arose to obscure the path; the river of water along the path which could mean destruction; the rod of iron, which represented security in staying on the path; the huge building across the river filled with scoffing people; the susceptibility of those who had followed the path to succumb to the scorn and pride of those of the world; and the wandering away of those who had partaken of the fruit of the tree of life into forbidden paths of destruction.

I know of no more graphic description of the condition of those who call themselves Latter-day Saints in relation to the influences of the world than this great vision. This story is reality. It is a great prophecy. It is a vivid warning.

### **"It is my angel"**

Let me complete the story of the young man in prison. Brother Smith pointed to an angel the young man had painted hovering over the chasm of filthy water and asked him: "Where did you get that angel? I don't remember any angel when I read about the picture."

The young man replied: "I know. I put it there. It is my angel. As I painted the picture, I began to realize that God had placed an influence in my way which could bring me to safety and redeem me from the course I have been pursuing."

This experience, of course, was the beginning of his recovery.

### **Experience teaches reality**

Yes, the voices and enticements of the world make good seem evil and

evil, good. The false attractions to engage in immorality, to view that which is forbidden on your home video, to seek unbounded pleasure as if God did not exist, are, in reality, the yawning pit of hell, set there by the one who will try to bind you with his awful chains.

I learned once upon a time to fly airplanes. The instructor was flying straight and level. On the horizon was a range of mountains. Then he did something like this [demonstration of snap roll and spin] and I saw the mountain rise up and stand on end. It turned upside down and then continued to its normal position. He put the plane into a spin, and as we were falling and gyrating, I looked below and saw the whole earth turning as if it were a huge wheel. The vision was vivid. It looked so real. I have performed these maneuvers many times since: the snap roll and the spin. If I were to do them today, I could no longer make the mountain turn over or the earth gyrate. Why? Because experience has taught me reality, and now I cannot be deceived.

### **Hold fast to the iron rod**

Reality for members of the Church is: "Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Father and the Son actually appeared to the Prophet Joseph. The gospel has been restored to the earth."

We have no excuse to deviate from the paths of righteousness. If we hold fast to the iron rod, we cannot be deceived.

In one of the hymns, we sing of Nephi, a seer of olden time. Nephi, of course, also saw the vision of his father Lehi.

To Nephi, seer of olden time,  
A vision came from God.  
Wherein the holy word sublime,  
Was shown an iron rod.

While on our journey here below,  
Beneath temptation's power,  
Through mists of darkness we  
must go,  
In peril every hour.

And when temptation's power is  
nigh,  
Our pathway clouded o'er,  
Upon the rod we can rely,  
And heaven's aid implore.

Hold to the rod, the iron rod;  
'Tis strong, and bright, and true;  
The iron rod is the word of God,

'Twill safely guide us through.  
(*Hymns*, no. 186.)

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Benson

Sister Barbara B. Smith will now  
address us.

## Sister Barbara B. Smith

President Kimball, President Hinckley, Brethren, and my dear brothers and sisters, this afternoon I feel somewhat like a former Chief Justice who explained his feelings on his ninety-fifth birthday anniversary. In his mind he rationalized, "It's just another birthday like all the others." But as he stood to acknowledge the occasion, his words revealed a love of life, a love of his work and of his fellowmen. He said:

"I have warmed both hands before the fire of life. . . . The rich spoils of memory are mine. . . . Mine, too, are the precious things of today. . . . The best of life is always further on. Its real lure is hidden from our eyes somewhere behind the hills of time" (Lillian Eichler Watson, ed., *Lights from Many Lamps* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951], pp. 267-68).

Like that grand old man, I love life. I love the work in which I have been engaged for the past nine and one-half years—the demanding, intense, but beautiful work of Relief Society. It has been so sweet to me that it has seemed but a fleeting moment in time.

### Montage of memories of Relief Society

As I stand at this point of transition, a montage of memories crowd my mind—of family, my good husband supporting and patiently waiting for me, of my children and their mates struggling to arrange their busy sched-

ules to meet mine, and of grandchildren often being my examples; of the women with whom I have worked—a kaleidoscope of images, experiences, and impressions come to me of them.

I see my devoted, talented, loyal counselors, Marian R. Boyer, Janath R. Cannon, Shirley W. Thomas, and Ann S. Reese, and my secretary-treasurer, Mayola R. Miltenberger, all of whom I dearly love. I see the brilliant, gifted women who have served with me on the Relief Society General Board. And there is my personal secretary and the dear women of our staff, the hostesses who serve in the Relief Society Building, our public communications representative, Moana B. Bennett.

I also see the faithful stake and ward Relief Society leaders and the many, many sisters who comprise the membership of the Relief Society throughout the Church whom I have come to know and appreciate.

### Warmed by fire of their lives

At this moment, I can only echo President Kimball's words: "God bless the women—the wonderful, wonderful women!" ("Women, Wonderful Women!" *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1958, p. 8).

Certainly I have warmed both my hands at the fires of their lives.

I have seen nobility emerge as I have observed them overcome personal