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"THE CHALLENGES OF THOSE DAYS"

PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY AND THE WILL TO BELIEVE

By Gary James Bergera

GORDON B. HINCKLEY, FIFTEENTH PRESIDENT of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is a man of certain faith. "I believe without equivocation or reservation in God, the Eternal Father," he has proclaimed. "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal, living God. . . . [T]hat testimony comes by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a gift, sacred and wonderful, borne by revelation from the third member of the Godhead."¹ His witness of Jesus Christ, the First Vision, the Book of Mormon, and the restoration of the priesthood is plainspoken and indomitable.² Yet by his own account, that faith endured a period of some questioning during his years as an undergraduate at the University of Utah in the early 1930s. For this reason, and unlike many others among the Church's general authorities, one never hears in President Hinckley's articulation of his personal testimony the words, "There never was a time when I did not know . . ." or "I have known for as long as I can remember. . . ."³ In fact, President Hinckley is one of a very few high-ranking Church leaders ever to openly acknowledge having once harbored questions regarding his own faith. While his authorized biography treats this episode only briefly as part of the larger drama of his life story,⁴ President Hinckley's measured public disclosures offer insight into his own experience with doubt, its resolution, and the nature of his testimony.

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A HOUSE OF LEARNING

"Education is a great conversion process under which abstract knowledge becomes useful and productive activity."

BORN ON 23 June 1910 into a quiet neighborhood on the corner of Windsor Street and 700 South (northeast of Liberty Park in Salt Lake City), to Bryant and Ada (Bitner) Hinckley, Gordon Bitner Hinckley joined an already large family.⁵ As a two-year-old, he battled the whooping cough and soon afterwards developed asthma and several allergies, including hay fever. (Because of this, he would be barred entrance to the U.S. Navy in 1941.) Eventually, hoping in part to provide his frail son a better climate and cleaner air, his father purchased a farm eight and a half miles southeast in the East Millcreek area of the valley, where Gordon spent his summers.

Playful and rambunctious, young Gordon sometimes tested his parents' patience. "When I was a small boy in the first grade," he recalled in 1987,

I experienced what I thought was a rather tough day at school. I came home, walked in the house, threw my book on the kitchen table, and let forth an expletive that included the name of the Lord.

My mother was shocked. She told me quietly, but firmly, how wrong I was. She told me that I could not have words of that kind coming out of my mouth. She led me by the hand into the bathroom, where she took from the shelf a clean washcloth, put it under the faucet, and then generously coated it with soap. She said, "We'll have to wash out your mouth." She told me to open it, and I did so reluctantly. Then she

rubbed the soapy washcloth around my tongue and teeth. I sputtered and fumed and felt like swearing again, but I didn't. I rinsed and rinsed my mouth, but it was a long while before the soapy taste was gone. In fact, whenever I think of that experience, I can still taste the soap.⁶

Six years later, Gordon entered junior high school only to learn that the building could not accommodate the many new students. He and his classmates were instructed to return to classes in their older elementary school building. "We were insulted," he reported in 1993:

We were furious. We'd spent six unhappy years in that building, and we felt we deserved something better. The boys of the class all met after school. We decided we wouldn't tolerate this kind of treatment. We were determined we'd go on strike.

The next day we did not show up. But we had no place to go. We couldn't stay home, because our mothers would ask questions. We didn't think of going downtown to a show. We had no money for that. We didn't think of going to the park. We were afraid we might be seen by Mr. Clayton, the truant officer. We didn't think of going out behind the school fence and telling shady stories because we didn't know any. We'd never heard of such things as drugs or anything of the kind. We just wandered about and wasted the day.

The next morning, the principal, Mr. Stearns, was at the front door of the school to greet us. His demeanor matched his name. He said some pretty straightforward things and then told us that we could not come back to school until we brought a note from our parents. That was my first experience with a lockout. Striking, he said, was not the way to settle a problem. We were expected to be responsible citizens, and if we had a complaint, we could come to the principal's office and discuss it.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to go home and get the note.

I remember walking sheepishly into the house. My mother asked what was wrong. I told her. I said that I needed a note. She wrote a note. It was very brief. It was the most stinging rebuke she ever gave me. It read as follows:

"Dear Mr. Stearns,

Please excuse Gordon's absence yesterday. His action was simply an impulse to follow the crowd."

She signed it and handed it to me.

I walked back over to school and got there about the same time a few other boys did. We all handed our notes to Mr. Stearns. I do not know whether he read them, but I have never forgotten my mother's note. Though I had been an active party to the action we had taken, I resolved then and there that I would never do anything on the basis of simply following

the crowd. I determined then and there that I would make my own decisions on the basis of their merits and my standards and not be pushed in one direction or another by those around me.⁷

Less embarrassing, but equally revealing of his upbringing, are President Hinckley's memories of his parents' infectious love of books and reading. His father's library—impressive even by today's standards—included the fifty volumes of the *Harvard Classics* and offered both a refuge and a virtually endless source of knowledge, sacred and secular. "The older I grow," he recalled in 1982,

the more thankful I feel to my parents in providing for us, in the home in which we were reared, good things to read. We had a library in that home with more than a thousand volumes. In those days, of course, we had no television, and radio was not even available during most of those earlier years. I do not wish to convey the idea that as children we read extensively in our father's books. But they provided an environment. We saw our father and mother read, and they read to us. It did something of an indefinable nature. It gave us a familiarity with good books. We felt at home and at ease with them. They were not strangers to us. They were as friends, willing to give to us if we were willing to make a little effort.⁸

Three years later, he remembered, with similar affection:

When I was a boy we lived in a large old house. One room was called the library. It had a solid table and a good lamp, three or four comfortable chairs with good light, and books in cases that lined the walls. There were many volumes—the acquisitions of my father and mother over a period of many years.

We were never forced to read them, but they were placed where they were handy and where we could get at them whenever we wished.

There was quiet in that room. It was understood that it was a place to study.

There were also magazines—the Church magazines and two or three other good magazines. There were books of history and literature, books on technical subjects, dictionaries, a set of encyclopedias, and an atlas of the world. There was no television, of course, at that time. Radio came along while I was growing up. But there was an environment, an environment of learning. I would not have you believe that we were great scholars. But we were exposed to great literature, great ideas from great thinkers, and the language of men and women who thought deeply and wrote beautifully.⁹

Though President Hinckley would never describe himself as being especially bookish during his childhood and early adolescent years (in fact, he felt more at ease using his hands), his subsequent intimate encounters with the world's wisdom would eventually ignite and feed a curious mind eager to engage an intellectualism that celebrated both the freedom to think and the quest for truth. His love of reading, especially

history, would remain a vital activity—one often unsatisfied given the press of other assignments and responsibilities¹⁰—for the remainder of his life. “There is something wonderful about a good book,” he commented in 1996. “I have a computer in my study but I am still a stranger to it. And I am afraid I ever will be. I putter around with it, but it and I do not get along very well. That is why I am so grateful for books. I know how to handle them, how to deal with them, how to use them, I hope.”¹¹ “You can pick [a book] up,” he added the next year. “You can heft it. You can read it. You can set it down. You can think of what you have read. It does something for you. You can share great minds and great actions and great undertakings in the pages of a book.”¹²

“The learning process is an endless process,” he told Church educators in 1978. “We must read, we must observe, we must assimilate, and we must ponder that to which we expose our minds.”¹³ “What a remarkable thing this is,” he noted thirteen years later,

this process whereby the cumulative knowledge of the centuries has been summarized and filtered so that in a brief period one can learn what was first learned only through long exercises of research, trial, and error. Education is a great conversion process under which abstract knowledge becomes useful and productive activity. It is something that never need stop—no matter how old we grow we can acquire knowledge and use it. We can gather wisdom and profit from it. We can be entertained through the miracle of reading and exposure to the arts—they add to the blessings and fulfillment of living.¹⁴

President Hinckley’s love of books and reading may not have been as manifest during his childhood as was later the case. Still one senses in his reminiscences the seeds of a desire for knowledge and learning that would enable him to navigate the sometimes turbulent waters of faith and doubt.



UNIVERSITY OF UTAH GRADUATION PICTURE, 1932

It was into that world of economic distress that we of the class of '32 arrived, breathing something of an air of cynicism. It was easy to become sour, to look upon the world with a sense of gloom, to doubt one's faith in the Church and in religious matters generally.



have since passed, years in which I have read much of his words and works, that knowledge has grown stronger and ever more certain.¹⁵

Recalling the power of this episode and its subsequent relationship to his collegiate struggle with doubt, he noted to students at Brigham Young University two years later:

Many years ago when at the age of twelve I was ordained a deacon, my father, who was president of our stake, took me to my first stake priesthood meeting. In those days these meetings were held on a week

THE BIRTH OF TESTIMONY “Something happened within me.”

IN 1977 ELDER Hinckley publicly recalled, as if it had been yesterday, the specific event that fifty-five years earlier had triggered the beginnings of his testimony of the Church. “When I was a boy, twelve years of age,” he commented,

my father took me to a meeting of the priesthood of the stake in which we lived [i.e., Liberty Stake]. I sat on the back row while he, as president of the stake, sat on the stand. At the opening of that meeting, the first of its kind I had ever attended, three or four hundred men stood. They were men from varied backgrounds and many vocations, but each had in his heart the same conviction, out of which together they sang these great words:

*Praise to the man who
communed with Jehovah!*

*Jesus anointed that
Prophet and Seer*

*Blessed to open the last
dispensation,*

*Kings shall extol him,
and nations revere.*

Something happened within me as I heard those men of faith sing. There came into my boyish heart a knowledge, placed there by the Holy Spirit, that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of the Almighty. In the many years that

night. I recall that we went to the Tenth Ward building in Salt Lake City. He walked up to the stand, and I sat on the back row, feeling a little alone and uncomfortable in that hall filled with strong men who had been ordained to the priesthood of God. The meeting was called to order, the opening song was announced, and—as was then the custom—we all stood to sing. There were perhaps as many as four hundred there, for it was a very large stake. Together these men lifted their strong voices, some with accents of the European lands from which they had come as converts and all singing with a great spirit of conviction and testimony. . . .

They were singing of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and as they did so there came into my young heart a great surge of love for and belief in the mighty Prophet of this dispensation. In my childhood I had been taught much of him in meetings and classes in our ward as well as in our home; but my experience in that stake priesthood meeting was different. I knew then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet a God.

It is true that during the years which followed there were times when that testimony wavered somewhat, particularly in the seasons of my undergraduate university work—not at this university, but at another [i.e., the University of Utah].

However, that conviction never left me entirely; and it has grown stronger through the years, partly because of the challenges of those days which compelled me to read and study and make certain for myself.¹⁶

A DARK SEASON

"It was a time of terrible discouragement, and I'm frank to say that I felt some of that myself."

GORDON HINCKLEY ENTERED the University of Utah as a lanky, eighteen-year-old freshman in the fall of 1928. Although he had considered architecture as a profession, he found himself drawn to the humanities and decided instead to major in English and to minor in Latin and Greek. He devoured Milton, Longfellow, Emerson, Carlyle, Shakespeare, and Homer, and enrolled in classes in English, speech, history, physics, anthropology, economics, sociology, and geology. "I couldn't do it now," he commented in 1995, "but once I could have read you the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the original Greek."¹⁷ "I have read much of English literature," he also explained. "In my university days, I tasted the beauty and richness of the whole field from ancient to modern times. I have been lifted by writings that have come of the genius of gifted men and women."¹⁸ Paying his own tuition and other expenses, Gordon worked during these years as a locker-room attendant in the Deseret Gym (which his father managed). Following graduation in 1932, he planned to pursue journalism at Columbia University in New York City.

It was during those years, especially as he neared completion of his undergraduate studies, that President Hinckley first confronted what his authorized biographer describes as "questions" regarding "life, the world, and even the Church" compounded by a "critical attitude."¹⁹ That President Hinckley has addressed his period of doubt publicly suggests that he is neither embarrassed nor ashamed of the experience. And though he has repeatedly emphasized the ultimately salutary result of such a process of struggle, it is clear that the experience was difficult, even traumatic. "That was a dark season, that year of 1932," he vividly recalled sixty years later.

It was at the bottom of the great worldwide depression. The unemployment rate was not the 5 or 6 or 7 percent over which we worry today, but more than 30 percent.²⁰ Men saw their savings vanish, and some, with nothing to live for, took their own lives. Many with greater faith held on tenaciously as they sank into the pit of poverty.

It was into that world of economic distress that we of the class of '32 arrived, breathing something of an air of cynicism.²¹

President Hinckley admits that he partook somewhat of that "cynicism and despair," reporting in 1985:

I was once a university student, and along with other things, I studied some philosophy, some anthropology, some history. I had been reared in a good Latter-day Saint home, imbued with the faith of my good father and mother. But questions stirred in my mind. It was a gloomy period in the history of the world, a time of dark cynicism, not only over economic matters but over values in general. We were in the midst of the worst economic depression in modern history. . . . The prospects for employment were bleak indeed. And the prospects for marriage were seriously clouded by the lack of opportunity to earn a living. It was easy to become sour, to look upon the world with a sense of gloom, to doubt one's faith in the Church and in religious matters generally.²²

"I remember when I was a college student," he had explained the previous year,

there were great discussions on the question of organic evolution. I took classes in geology and biology and heard the whole story of Darwinism as it was then taught. I wondered about it. I thought much about it. But I did not let it throw me, for I read what the scriptures said about our origins and our relationship to God. Since then I have become acquainted with what to me is a far more important and wonderful kind of evolution. It is the evolution of men and women as the sons and daughters of God, and of our marvelous potential for growth as children of our Creator.²³

"It was a time of terrible discouragement," he added a decade later in a videotaped documentary prepared by the Church, and I'm frank to say that I felt some of that myself. I began to question some things, including, perhaps in

a slight measure, the faith of my parents and some of those things. That isn't unusual for university students, but the atmosphere was particularly acute at that time. But I'm grateful to say that through all of that, the testimony which had come to me as a boy remained with me and became as a bulwark to which I could cling through those very difficult years.²⁴

"FORGET YOURSELF AND GO TO WORK"

A day of decision—of new light and new joy

AS COMFORTING AS he reported his first stake-wide priesthood meeting to have been, his parents' example and encouragement were equally, if not more, beneficial. "My father and mother were absolutely solid in their faith," he told his biographer in 1994. "They didn't try to push the gospel down my throat or compel me to participate, but they didn't back away from expressing their feelings either. My father was wise and judicious and was not dogmatic. He had taught university students and appreciated young people along with their points of view and difficulties. He had a tolerant, understanding attitude and was willing to talk about anything I had on my mind."²⁵

Though President Hinckley typically focuses on the questions to his faith posed by his university studies and the bleakness of the Depression, his biographer makes it clear that he struggled as well to explain his mother's sudden, seemingly inexplicable, death in 1930 and his father's remarriage less than two years later.²⁶ Of his mother's passing, he recalled in 1993:

She developed cancer. [My father] was solicitous of her every need. I recall our family prayers, with his tearful pleadings and our tearful pleadings.

Of course there was no medical insurance then. He would have spent every dollar he owned to help her. He did, in fact, spend very much. He took her to Los Angeles in search of better medical care. But it was to no avail.

That was sixty-two years ago, but I remember with clarity my brokenhearted father as he stepped off the train and greeted his grief-stricken children. We walked solemnly down the station platform to the baggage car, where the casket was unloaded and taken by the mortician. We came to know even more about the tenderness of our father's heart. This has had an effect on me all of my life.

I also came to know something of death—the absolute devastation of children losing their mother—but also of peace without pain, and the certainty that death cannot be the end of the soul.²⁷

In mid-1933, while still dealing with his questions, approaching his twenty-third birthday, Gordon Hinckley was called on a proselytizing mission for the Church. The call was completely unexpected—President Hinckley later described it as "shocking"—but soon would lead to the most transformative experience yet of his young faith. "Very few missionaries were going into the field at that time," he explained in 1986.

"We send out as many in a week now as then went during the entire year."²⁸

I received my bachelor's degree and planned on somehow attending graduate school. Then the bishop [John C. Duncan] came with what seemed to me a shocking suggestion. He spoke of a mission. I was called to go to England which, at that time, was the most expensive mission in the world. The cost per month was the equivalent of what would be about \$500 now.

We discovered that my mother, who had passed away, had established a small savings account to be available for this purpose. I had a savings account in a different place, but the bank in which I had mine had failed. There was then no government insurance program to cover its failure as there is now. My father, a man of great faith and love, supplied the necessary means, with all of the family cooperating at a sacrifice. As I look back upon it, I see all of it as a miracle. Somehow the money was there every month.²⁹

"The mission became a marvelous experience," he noted the previous year, "one for which I shall be eternally grateful, and one which set some anchors and guideposts in my life. Among other things that I gained during that mission was a solid and enduring testimony of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon and of the divine calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith."³⁰

Like the witness he had received standing at attention in Salt Lake's Tenth Ward chapel in 1922, President Hinckley today easily recalls the moment when his religious questions and doubts began to subside, giving way to the faith and testimony that would continue to build, though not without setbacks, throughout his life's journey. "I was not well when I arrived [in Preston, England, in mid-1933]," he reported in 1987.

Those first few weeks, because of illness and the opposition which we felt, I was discouraged.³¹ I wrote a letter home to my good father and said that I was wasting my time and his money. He was my father and my stake president, and he was a wise and inspired man. He wrote a very short letter to me which said, "Dear Gordon, I have your recent letter. I have only one suggestion: forget yourself and go to work." Earlier that morning in our scripture class my companion and I had read these words of the Lord: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." (Mark 8:35)

Those words of the Master, followed by my father's letter with his counsel to forget myself and go to work, went into my very being. With my father's letter in hand, I went into our bedroom in the house at 15 Wadham Road, where we lived, and got on my knees and made a pledge with the Lord. I covenanted that I would try to forget myself and lose myself in His service.

That July day in 1933 was my day of decision. A new light came into my life and a new joy into my heart. The fog of England seemed to lift, and I saw the sunlight. I had a rich and wonderful mission experience, for which I shall ever be grateful, laboring in Preston where the work began and in other places where it had moved forward, including the great city of London, where I served the larger part of my mission.³²

THE WILL TO BELIEVE

"Look above and beyond the negative, the critical, the cynical, the doubtful."

FOR PRESIDENT HINCKLEY, as I read him, faith in God, and hence in the Church, is essentially a question of will—one determines to surrender one's doubts, chooses to accept God's will, and believes. "The faith to try leads to direction by the Spirit," he told BYU students in 1973, "and the fruits that flow therefrom are marvelous to behold and experience."³³ "To all within the sound of my voice who may have doubts," he urged general conference faithful five years later,

I repeat the words given Thomas as he felt the wounded hands of the Lord: "Be not faithless, but believing." Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the greatest figure of time and eternity. Believe that his matchless life reached back before the world was formed. Believe that he was the Creator of the earth on which we live. Believe that he was Jehovah of the Old Testament, that he was the Messiah of the New Testament, that he died and was resurrected, that he visited these western continents and taught the people here, that he ushered in this final gospel dispensation, and that he lives, the living Son of the living God, our Savior and our Redeemer.³⁴

"That's the way you gain a testimony," he counseled the Saints in 1995. "You do the will of the Father, and as certainly as you do the will of the Father you will know of the truth of the gospel, including the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."³⁵ "If you have any question concerning the truth of this work," he added the next year, "you do the will of God and you will know that it is true."³⁶

"When I discuss faith," President Hinckley wrote in 1988, "I



ON HIS MISSION IN ENGLAND, CIRCA 1933

That July day in 1933 was my day of decision. A new light came into my life and a new joy into my heart. The fog of England seemed to lift, and I saw the sunlight.



do not mean it in an abstract sense. I mean it as a living, vital force with recognition of God as our Father and Jesus Christ as our Savior. When we accept this basic premise, there will come an acceptance of their teachings and an obedience which will bring peace and joy in this life and exaltation in the life to come."³⁷ For at its core, Mormonism "is not complex," he explained in 1982, it is a beautiful and simple pattern, a constant source of strength, a wellspring of faith. The keystone of that doctrine is that God is our Eternal Father and Jesus is the Christ, our living Redeemer. We are sons and daughters of God. He loves us and invites us to love him, showing that love through service to others of his children. His Beloved Son is our Savior, who gave his life on the cross of Calvary as a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of mankind. By the power of his divine Sonship he rose from the grave, becoming "the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20), assuring for all a resurrection from the dead and inviting each of us to partake of eternal life according to our obedience to his laws and commandments.

They, that is, the Father and the Son, appeared to the boy Joseph Smith in a most glorious and wonderful manifestation to open this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. (See D&C 112:30.) All of the elements of previous bestowals of divine teaching and authority are now brought together through restoration in a final and everlasting dispensation.³⁸

However, appreciating that such belief may not come as easily for others, that no two persons will respond to gospel and life's challenges the same way, President Hinckley also admonishes members:

I know of no more beautiful story in all literature than that found in the fifteenth chapter of Luke [the parable of the prodigal son]. . . .

I ask you to read that story. Every parent ought to read it again and again. It is large enough to encompass every household, and enough larger than that to encompass all mankind, for are we not all prodigal sons and daughters who need to repent and partake of the forgiving mercy of our Heavenly Father and

then follow his example?³⁹

"I'm not suggesting that you simply put on rose-colored glasses to make the world about you look rosy," he told students at BYU-Hawaii in 1983. "I ask, rather, that you look above and beyond the negative, the critical, the cynical, the doubtful, to the positive and the affirmative."⁴⁰ "The decisions of this generation are essentially the same as were those of mine," he wrote two years later, "and I have been through many of them. They are often complex and difficult. They are fraught with tremendous consequences."⁴¹

Certainly the Church is not without its "aberrations," President Hinckley reminded the Saints in 1982. "There are blemishes to be found, if searched for, in the lives of all men, including our leaders past and present. But these are only incidental to the magnitude of their service and to the greatness of their contributions."⁴² He elaborated three years later:

Questions may arise in our minds concerning the Church, its history, its doctrine, its practices. I want to give you my testimony concerning this work. I have been heavily involved in it for more than a half century. I have worked with the presidents of the Church from President Heber J. Grant onward. I have known in a very personal way President Grant, President George Albert Smith, President David O. McKay, President Joseph Fielding Smith, President Harold B. Lee, and President Spencer W. Kimball. I have known the counselors of all of these men, and I have known the Council of the Twelve during the years of the administrations of these Presidents. All of these men have been human. They have had human traits and perhaps some human weaknesses. But over and above all of that, there has been in the life of every one of them an overpowering manifestation of the inspiration of God. Those who have been Presidents have been prophets in a very real way. I have intimately witnessed the spirit of revelation upon them. Each man came to the Presidency after many years of experience as a member of the Council of the Twelve and in other capacities. The Lord refined and polished each one, let



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I ask, rather, that you look above and beyond the negative, the critical, the cynical, the doubtful, to the positive and the affirmative.



him know discouragement and failure, let him experience illness and in some cases deep sorrow. All of this became part of a great refining process, and the effect of that process became beautifully evident in their lives.⁴³

"Through long years of dedicated service," he observed in 1991, [the presidents of the Church] have been refined and winnowed and chastened and molded for the purposes of the Almighty. Could anyone doubt this after reading of the lives of such men as Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, and Joseph F. Smith? The Lord subdued their hearts and refined their natures to prepare them for the great and sacred responsibility later thrust upon them.⁴⁴

Thus, understandably, President Hinckley is modest in regards to his own calling as prophet: "I think I can testify that the Lord has spoken quietly. I didn't hear any words, but in the middle of the night ideas have come into my head which, I think, have been prophetic in their nature."⁴⁵ Yet he is also absolutely confident in his calling: "The Lord will never let the General Authorities of this Church lead it astray. It won't happen. The President of the Church

will not be permitted to lead this people astray. This is the Lord's Church, and He has the capacity and the power and the right and the authority to lift any of us out of the way. It won't happen."⁴⁶

AFTER MORE THAN forty-seven years as a general authority, President Gordon B. Hinckley has come to embrace his collegiate immersion in an atmosphere of doubt as formative in the development of his testimony of God and stands today convinced that the surest witness of the abiding truthfulness of the gospel lies both in the good works of the Church and in the united testimonies of its members. "Theology may be argued over," he wrote in 1995, "but personal testimony, coupled with performance, cannot be refuted. . . . 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."⁴⁷

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," general conference address, in *Ensign*, November 1986, 49–51.
2. President Hinckley terms these four beliefs "cornerstones of faith." They are, he says, "absolutely fundamental to this work—the very foundation, anchors on which it stands." See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Four Cornerstones of Faith," *Ensign*, February 2004, 4.
3. See, for example, Marion G. Romney: "I have no memory of a time or circumstance in which I have had the slightest doubt or question about Jesus of Nazareth being 'The Christ'; the Son of the Father both in the spirit and in the flesh; the Savior of the world" ("My Testimony of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, September 1974, 2); Ezra Taft Benson: "I cannot recall a time that I did not believe in Jesus Christ. It seems that the reality of His life, death, and resurrection has always been a part of me" ("The Meaning of Easter," *Ensign*, April 1992, 2); also James E. Faust: "I have a certain knowledge that Jesus of Nazareth is our divine Savior. I know that He lives. From my earliest recollection I have had a sure perception of this. As long as I have lived, I have had a simple faith that has never doubted" ("That We Might Know Thee," *Ensign*, January 1999, 5).
4. See Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 44–48. See also George McCune, *Gordon B. Hinckley: Shoulder for the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Hawkes Publishing, 1996), 181–83. Other useful biographical portraits include LaMar S. Williams, "Gordon B. Hinckley: Assistant to the Twelve," *Improvement Era*, June 1953, 396, 472–74; Wendell J. Ashton, "Gordon B. Hinckley of the Quorum of the Twelve," *Improvement Era*, December 1961, 906–07, 978, 980, 982–83; and Jeffrey R. Holland, "President Gordon B. Hinckley: Stalwart and Brave He Stands," *Ensign*, June 1995, 2–13.
5. Ada was Bryant's second wife. His first, Christine Johnson, whom he wed in 1893, died in 1908. By the time of her death, she had borne eight children, the youngest being two months old. Bryant married Ada about twelve months later. Gordon was the new couple's firstborn. Ada would bear an additional four children before succumbing to cancer in 1930.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Take Not the Name of God in Vain," general conference address, in *Ensign*, November 1987, 46.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Some Lessons I Learned as a Boy," general conference address, in *Ensign*, May 1993, 53.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Tithing: An Opportunity to Prove Our Faithfulness," general conference address, in *Ensign*, May 1982, 42.
9. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Environment of Our Homes," *Ensign*, June 1985, 4.
10. "The one resentment I think I carry," he once admitted, "concerns the many pressing demands which limit the opportunity for reading." Quoted in *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 299.
11. *Ibid.*, 315.
12. *Ibid.*, 315–16.
13. *Ibid.*, 298.
14. *Ibid.*, 170–71.
15. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Joseph the Seer," general conference address, in *Ensign*, May 1977, 66. Bryant Hinckley served as second counselor in the Liberty Stake presidency from 1907 to 1919, and as first counselor from 1919 to 1925. In 1925, he was called as stake president, a position he held until 1936. At that time, Liberty Stake was home to some 15,000 members, making it the largest stake in the Church.
16. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Praise to the Man," BYU fireside address, 4 November 1979, in *1979 Devotional Speeches of the Year: BYU Devotional and Fireside Addresses* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1979), 202–03; reprinted nearly four years later in Gordon B. Hinckley, "Praise to the Man," *Ensign*, August 1983, 2. See also Gordon B. Hinckley, "My Testimony," general conference address, in *Ensign*, November 1993, 51.
17. Quoted in Holland, 7. Despite McCune's suggestion, religion was not a factor in President Hinckley's academic interest in Latin and Greek. See McCune, 166.
18. Hinckley, "My Testimony," 32.
19. Dew, 46, 47.
20. In 1933, Utah's unemployment rate was nearly 36 percent, fourth highest in the nation (which averaged almost 24 percent); 32 percent of all Utahns were receiving U.S. government relief; and nearly one-third of the state's banks had failed. See John S. McCormick, "The Great Depression," in *Utah History Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Kent Powell (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 136.
21. Gordon B. Hinckley, "This I Believe," BYU fireside address, 1 March 1992, in *Brigham Young University, 1991–92 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1992), 75–76. His own father agreed to an 20 percent decrease in salary as membership in the Deseret Gym plummeted after 1929.
22. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Keep the Faith," *Ensign*, September 1985, 3.
23. Gordon B. Hinckley, "God Hath Not Given Us the Spirit of Fear," *Ensign*, October 1984, 4–5.
24. Gordon B. Hinckley, quoted in *Gordon B. Hinckley: Man of Integrity, 15th President of the Church*, VHS 53503 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995).
25. Dew, 47.
25. Dew, 48–55. As described by Dew, the struggles of the Hinckley children concerning their father's decision to marry May Green (just as they may have been for Christine's children when Bryant married Ada) were probably typical: they were determined to preserve their mother's memory, and it was difficult for them to see their father show affection for someone other than their mother. Eventually, however, May became beloved by all and a calming influence on Gordon and his siblings.
- I remember a time when I was terribly discouraged, and I was brooding. I was sitting [in the library] reading, but not reading, just sympathizing with myself. She came in, and in a quiet, very understanding way talked to me. I don't know what the adversity was, but it didn't look to be much of an adversity after she had finished talking with me. She could pour oil on troubled waters. . . . (55)
27. Hinckley, "Some Lessons," 54.
28. In 1933, the number of new LDS missionaries called into service totaled 490. While an increase of 27 percent over the previous year's low of 386, 1933's total was the second lowest number of new missionaries since 1918. In 1934, this number increased by nearly two-thirds to 801. Of the Church's thirty-nine missions in 1933, the British Mission received the most new missionaries—forty-seven—that year. See Gordon Irving, "Numerical Strength and Geographical Distribution of the LDS Missionary Force, 1830–1974," *Task Papers in LDS History, No. 1* (Salt Lake City: Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1975), 18–20. These figures differ slightly from those in Dew, 58.
- In 1985, 19,890 new missionaries were set apart, or an average of 382.5 per week. In 1986, these totals stood at 20,798 or 400 per week. See *2005 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: *Deseret Morning News*, 2004), 635.
29. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Question of a Mission," general conference address, in *Ensign*, May 1986, 40.
30. Hinckley, "Keep the Faith," 3.
31. Almost immediately upon arriving in Preston, Elder Hinckley was stricken with another bout of hay fever. See Dew, 64.
32. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Taking the Gospel to Britain: A Declaration of Vision, Faith, Courage, and Truth," *Ensign*, July 1987, 7. See also Gordon B. Hinckley, "Institute of Religion Devotional," 15 April 1997, in *Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley, Volume 1: 1995–1999* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 372.
33. *Teachings*, 186.
34. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Be Not Faithless," general conference address, in *Ensign*, May 1978, 59.
35. *Teachings*, 647.
36. *Ibid.*, 670.
37. Gordon B. Hinckley, "With All Thy Getting, Get Understanding," *Ensign*, August 1988, 5.
38. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Five Million Members—A Milestone and Not a Summit," general conference address, in *Ensign*, May 1982, 44–45.
39. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Of You It Is Required to Forgive," general conference address, in *Ensign*, November 1980, 62.
40. *Teachings*, 188.
41. Hinckley, "Keep the Faith," 3.
42. Hinckley, "Five Million Members," 46.
43. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Strengthening Each Other," *Ensign*, February 1985, 5.
44. Gordon B. Hinckley, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," *Ensign*, September 1991, 5.
45. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Inspirational Thoughts," *Ensign*, September 1991, 5.
46. *Discourses*, 313.
47. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Faith: The Essence of True Religion," *Ensign*, October 1995, 3–4.