

AN OLIVE LEAF

A DESIRE TO INVESTIGATE

By Hugh B. Brown

Few LDS leaders have ever spoken as eloquently about the relationship between doubt and faith as did Hugh B. Brown, counselor in the Church's First Presidency from 1961–70. The following is excerpted from An Abundant Life: The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown, edited by Edwin B. Firmage (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 135–38.

HERE SEEMS TODAY TO be a tendency toward flip-pant thinking, a lack of thought. There seems to be a tendency to belittle what our fathers and mothers thought because we feel we have made some progress scientifically. We are too ready to conclude that everything from past generations is now folly and that our main duty today, as far as the past is concerned, is to get away from it.

There is not enough of the attitude of the sincere investigator among us. When we come into a new field of research that will challenge our due and honest consideration, we should be warned against coming too quickly to a conclusion, of forming a decision too hastily. We should be scientific—that is, open-minded, approaching new problems without prejudice, deferring a decision until all the facts are in.

Some say that the open-minded leave room for doubt. But I believe we should doubt some of the things we hear. Doubt has a place if it can stir in one an interest to go out and find the truth for one's self. I should like to awaken in everyone a desire to investigate, to make an independent study of religion, and to know for themselves whether or not the teachings of the Mormon church are true.

I should like to see everyone prepared to defend the religion of his or her parents, not because it was the religion of our fathers and mothers but because they have found it to be the true religion. If one approaches it with an open mind, with a desire to know the truth, and if one questions with a sincere heart what one hears from time to time, he or she will be on



the road to growth and service.

There are altogether too many people in the world who are willing to accept as true whatever is printed in a book or delivered from a pulpit. Their faith never goes below the surface soil of authority. I plead with everyone I meet that they may drive their faith down through that soil and get hold of the solid truth that they may be able to withstand the winds and storms of indecision and of doubt, of opposition and persecution. Then, and only then, will we be able to defend our religion successfully. When I speak of defending our religion, I do not mean such defense as an army makes on the battlefield but the defense of clean and upright and virtuous life lived in harmony with an intelligent belief and understanding of the gospel. As Mormons, we should do with religion as we do with music, not defend it but simply render it. It

needs no defense. The living of religion is, after all, the greatest sermon, and if all of us would live it, we would create a symphony which would be appreciated by all. . . .

I ADMIRE men and women who have developed the questing spirit, who are unafraid of new ideas as stepping stones to progress. We should, of course, respect the opinions of others, but we should also be unafraid to dissent—if we are informed. Thoughts and expressions compete in the marketplace of thought, and in that competition truth emerges triumphant. Only error fears freedom of expression. . . .

Neither fear of consequence nor any kind of coercion should ever be used to secure uniformity of thought in the church. People should express their problems and opinions and be unafraid to think. . . .

We must be unafraid to contend for what we are thinking and to combat error with truth in this divided and imperiled world, and we must do it with the unfaltering faith that God is still in his heaven even though all is not well with the world. . . .