

# “Father, Are You There?”

HUGH B. BROWN

**M**y dear fellow workers, this is at once a frightening and an inspiring situation to be in, standing before what is estimated to be about 12,000 students. It is also humbling; it makes one realize how dependent he is on divine guidance.

## Cases of Slight Misunderstanding

I have appreciated very much the singing of this wonderful chorus. It is amazing to me as I travel around the Church to see how many fine choruses we have in all parts of the Church—and I have been in almost all of the stakes. But I think nothing finer can be or has been given than these numbers tonight by this chorus.

Of course I don't profess to be much of a judge of music. I fear I may be a little like a couple of fellows who were sitting in the bandstand. As the band was playing, each wanted to impress the other with his knowledge of music.

One said, “Do you know what the band's playing?”

The other answered, “Why, yes, that's *Tannhäuser*.”

“No, it isn't. It's the second movement of Chopin.”

The other man said, “Well, I'll go down and find out.” He went down toward the bandstand and came back shortly. He said, “No, we're both wrong. That was the ‘Refrain from Spitting.’ I saw it on the sign out there.”

There is only one justification for telling a story like that on an occasion like this, and that is that the speaker needs a little tranquilizer, and to have you respond by laughter helps one to get his bearings.

I was amused at a recent dinner that was given by someone in the Hotel Utah. One of the General Authorities was telling how, while he was visiting one of the stakes, he had stayed at the home of the stake president, who had a large family. In that family, as in many Latter-day Saint families, they had the habit of taking turns in offering the evening prayer. On this particular occasion a young girl, three years old, was praying. She prayed for the bishop, the stake president, the General Authorities, and President David O. McKay, who “stands on his head in the Church.”

How easily we can be misled when someone tells us something that we don't quite understand. I do not intend to attempt to give an oration tonight. I would like merely to talk about this and that with you, as it is a fireside. I would like to be free to depart from any text that my introductory remarks might indicate and just talk about various things as they come to mind.

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*Hugh B. Brown, first counselor in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, gave this fireside address on October 8, 1967.*

### **Widening Horizons**

As we approach life, as students we of course feel humble. At times we indicate that we are not very humble, but I am sure, as a general rule, that the young people of the Church are humble—humble in the sense that they seek divine guidance. I know they try to live so as to warrant answers to their prayers.

I am thinking now in terms of what we were—some of us nearly a hundred years ago and others of us barely eighteen or twenty years ago—that all of us at one time were little children. We came into this world rather helpless; the encircling arms of our mothers were the only protection we had, and the only thing we knew was their love. A little later our mothers put us in a crib and there, too, precautions were taken against any accident that might occur to us. We were protected and guarded. A little later we were out of the crib and into the room, crawling on the floor, Mother ever near to protect us. And then we found that there were other rooms in the house, and we did a little exploring, sometimes to the annoyance of our mothers. But later on we were permitted to go out in the yard, and there, too, were hedges and fences to restrict, restrain, and protect us.

Then, later, we learned to read and to write. Someone helped us across the road. We went to church and to school. And from there we found that there were other towns than our own. We went to larger cities on visits, and from there, perhaps, across the ocean to foreign countries. Perhaps some of us might have had an opportunity to fly. Some of you may have an opportunity to get into outer space.

Your conduct so far has been measured very largely by a process of pushing back your horizons, making inquiries, investigating, wondering, learning, and studying. That has been the process.

### **Life Is a Journey**

Life is very much like a journey. Those of you who live in Provo or those of you who are visiting here have undoubtedly at some time or other wanted to go to either New York or San Francisco in a car. Perchance you are offered a big reward if

you arrived there at a given time, and with high ambition you start on the journey. First you take the occasion to seek out someone who has been over the road. You take advice from those who know the way. You study road maps and familiarize yourselves with what may perhaps lie ahead. In other words, you prepare for the journey. On the journey you find that there are road signs; there are flashing signs indicating danger or soft shoulders. Sometimes there is a road out of repair or a bridge out. And you heed those warning signs. We hope you do. And if you do not, you will find that there are rules and regulations all the way through life with warning signs to help you avoid danger.

### **A Plan Founded on Law**

I am wondering if you folks, you young men and women who are here tonight, are aware of the fact that a plan was laid out for you before you came here—a plan devised by the greatest of all beings, your Heavenly Father, a plan that had in mind your development and growth. That plan is founded on law. Observance to law must become a rule in your life. Any rebellion against law is evidence of weakness. Any observance of law—willing observance—is evidence of a willingness to be led and guided and protected, as we were as little children.

If you start from here to New York in a car, you might have some trouble in Denver. Perhaps there is a blowout. Other dangerous things might happen, and you may wonder whether you are going to make it. You might get discouraged and give up, quit the road, and come back home. If you do, you are foolish, because there is a reward waiting at the other end. What you really should do is make amends and repairs, buy extra parts, learn something about the car you are driving, and then carry on.

In this battle of life, the car in which you travel is your own body, and you should learn all you can about it and then keep it in good order. You will find that there are very definite rules and regulations governing human conduct. In all of our experiences in life, we constantly need the

protective influences of those who love us. I said a moment ago that our mothers were guarding us and protecting us, guiding us and helping us across the road. But gradually this parental care and concern is withdrawn measurably, and we are given more freedom to do as we will. We go from place to place with considerable freedom, and yet we are always aware of the fact that our freedom is limited by our conduct. Obedience to law is liberty, and we learn that as we go forward.

On this journey of life you are not headed for New York or San Francisco; you are headed for immortality, eternal life, and eternal increase. When I mention eternal increase, I am referring not only to increase of posterity but to increase of knowledge and the power that comes with knowledge when it is set on fire. I am referring to the increase of wisdom, which is a proper use of knowledge, and to the increase of intelligence, which is the glory of God and will be the glory of man.

### **Self-Discipline**

I think every young person should decide rather early in life where he wants to go, what he wants to be, and what he is willing to pay to achieve his ends. In paying there is involved some self-sacrifice and a lot of self-discipline. If young men or young women lose control of himself or herself in the folly of association with others and if they lose the discipline that keeps them on the track, they are liable to lose all. I would mention, then, that one of the definite controlling factors of all life is self-discipline—that which a man uses when he is tempted by someone or something to do something or say something that he knows he ought not to do or say. When he gets the courage and the stamina to say no and mean it, then he can take charge of his life and go forward.

I think it very important that we understand the meaning of self-discipline. In the army I learned a little about discipline—not very much, but a little. I learned enough to know that if I were told to do a thing, I had better do it, and a number of you have learned the same thing in the army. There are good things in the army as well as some

things that are not so good, but discipline is one of the things that I appreciated in my military experiences.

Incidentally, the introduction indicated that I had been in many different activities at different times. I think that would indicate to most of you that I must be about 110 years old. I think I am very near that, but a little time is left, I think, for some of us.

### **Get Acquainted with God**

I think one of the first things that every young person should do is attempt to get acquainted with God—and I mean that in a very literal sense. I mean it in the sense that we are able to go to Him and obtain the kind of help that we need.

I remember when I was quite a lad (and that's remembering a long way back) what my mother said to me when I went to go on my mission in 1904 (and that's before some of you were born). She said, "My boy, you are going a long ways away from me now. Do you remember that when you were a little lad you used to have bad dreams and get frightened? Your bedroom was just off mine, and frequently you would cry out in the night and say, 'Mother, are you there?' And I would answer, 'Yes, my boy, I'm here—everything is all right. Turn over and go to sleep.' You always did. Knowing that I was there gave you courage.

"Now," she said, "you will be about 6,000 miles away, and though you may cry out for me, I cannot answer you." She added this: "There is one who can, and if you call to Him, He will hear you when you call. He will respond to your appeal. You just say, 'Father, are you there?' And there will come into your heart the comfort and solace such as you knew as a boy when I answered you."

I want to say to you young people that many times since then, in many and varying conditions, I have cried out, "Father, are you there?" I made that plea in the mission field when we were mobbed almost every night, driven from place to place. We were beaten and expelled from cities; our lives were threatened. Every time before I went out to those meetings, I would say, "Father, are you there?" And though I didn't hear a voice

and though I didn't see His person, I want to tell you young people that He replied to me with the comfort and assurance and testimony of His presence. It made me unafraid, and with that presence, I am grateful to say, we did not suffer much.

I think it important that we get acquainted with Him. I wonder if I should tell a story. Sometimes I have been accused of doing that. I can't help it. I'm like a man having fits. When a man has fits he knows he is going to have one—he feels it coming on and he has it. When I feel a story coming on, the only possible thing for me to do is to tell it. This story has to do with an experience of my own.

### **An Aura of Awful Blackness**

It has been indicated that I was asked to come down from Canada at a time when I was drilling oil wells, a time when I thought I was almost a millionaire, a time when it looked like nothing could save me from becoming a millionaire. I didn't want to be saved from the down-drag of money, but I had, at that time, a sort of feeling that I wanted to know whether it was right for me to pursue the course I was taking.

I awoke one morning at about three o'clock—mornings come early up there in the summertime. I was in a little cottage up in the Canadian Rockies. I was worried and bothered. I got out of my bed, dressed, and went up into the mountains, far back in the hills, remembering that the Savior often went to the mountains for His communications with His Father.

When I got up in the mountains on top of a peak, I was all alone. I removed my hat, and in a loud voice I said, "Oh, God, are you there? You know that I am about to be a millionaire, or I think I am. Father, if this is not to be good for me or my family, don't allow it to happen. If it is going to rob my family of their faith, don't allow it to happen." I talked to Him as a man would talk to another man. I didn't seem to get an answer. I stayed up there for some time.

I drove that evening back to Edmonton, and upon arriving I said to Sister Brown, "I think I'll not want any supper tonight. I think I'll go in the

back bedroom and sleep. You had better stay in the other room, because I fear I am going to have a wakeful night."

I went into that bedroom and closed the door, and I was conscious of a blackness such as I had never known. There was something in that room that made me feel very sincerely that I would like to be rubbed out—that I would like to cease to be. I didn't think of suicide, but I did think seriously that if there were any way that I could be washed out, that would be the best thing that could happen to me.

I spent the night in that attitude, in that aura of awful blackness. Early in the morning Sister Brown came in—she had heard me walking the floor. When she closed the door, she said, "My goodness, my dear! What's in this room?"

I said, "The devil is in this room, and he is trying to destroy me."

### **Deliverance and Peace**

Together we knelt at the bedside and prayed for guidance and deliverance. We didn't seem to get it. The next morning I went down to my office in the city. It was Saturday. I knew no one would be there, and I wanted to be alone. I knelt by my cot and pleaded to God for deliverance, for that awful blackness was still on my soul. And it seemed to me that the sun came up. I obtained peace of soul and serenity of spirit.

I phoned Sister Brown and told her, "Everything is all right. I don't know what happened, but it's all right."

### **A Call from the Prophet**

That night I was taking a bath. The telephone rang. Sister Brown came to the door and said, "Salt Lake is calling."

I said, "Who in the dickens wants to talk to me at this time of night?" It was 10:30. I went to the phone.

When I said hello I heard a voice that said, "This is David O. McKay calling."

I said, "Yes, President McKay."

"The Lord wants you to give the balance of your life to the Church. Tomorrow will be the

closing session of conference. Can you get here in time for the afternoon session?"

I told him I couldn't, as there were no planes flying. He said, "Come as soon as you can."

You know, I didn't think to ask him what there was in it. That's what I would do in an ordinary business deal.

I hung up, and that night—this was the night following the night of blackness in our lives—Sister Brown and I spent another wakeful night, but it was a night of bliss. Not that we were looking for position, but to think that the God of heaven would reach out 1,200 miles and touch a man on the shoulder and say, "Come," and to think that I would be that man was almost more than I could understand!

I told the president when I came down thirty days later about this experience, and he said, "As far as I know, every man who is called into the General Authorities has to wrestle with the devil." You have to have a lot of courage if you come out victorious.

### **The Approaches of the Adversary**

Do I know God lives? Do I know the devil lives? I want to tell you young people that there is a constant war between the two, and the war is over you and your soul. The adversary would take you and destroy you if God would permit it. He has many devices, many means of attack, and many avenues of approach, and you must be on guard.

Young people throughout the world today, there is a situation unlike anything that has ever happened in the world, and the situation is affecting the young people of the world adversely. Many of the young people of the world and some young people on the university campuses are taking part in activities that are not only deplorable but degrading. I want to say to you young people of BYU, the eyes of the whole Church are upon you, expecting you to stand firm; to have faith, fortitude, and courage; and to keep yourselves absolutely clean from the center of your heart to the ends of your fingers and toes. That is a challenge I issue to you tonight. Beware of the approaches of the adversary, and know always

that God stands ready to help. You can call on Him, and He will help.

### **Mistakes, Forgiveness, Repentance**

Now, you are going to make some mistakes. You are going to do wrong things—all of you, all of us. But the Lord has been good enough to make provision for us so that we can be forgiven of our sins.

I thought I would like to read you just a word or two about forgiveness. You know, the devil is very cunning in his approach. When a boy or girl has done something wrong, he whispers in their ears, "Now you have committed an unpardonable sin; there's no hope for you in the future." And he tells them that they might as well go on sinning because they have taken the first step and there is no turning back.

I want to say to you, my young friends, that that is a lie from the champion of all liars. God wants you to be forgiven. He wants you to change your course. He wants you to call for help. And He stands ready and willing to help.

*But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.*

*All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.*

*Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? [Ezekiel 18:21–23]*

I trust that every man and woman here tonight will take courage in the fact that God is real, and He is as close to you as you will let Him be.

The Lord said in the Doctrine and Covenants:

*For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;*

*Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven;*

*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.*  
[D&C 1:31–33]

I wanted to leave that word of encouragement, for every one of us needs to have that forgiveness. I pray that you may need it less and less as you go forward. I pray that we may be able, as young people and older ones, to so order our lives that we may keep in touch with the Master, keep in touch with the Shepherd, keep in touch with our Heavenly Father.

You know that palm trees do not grow from acorns—only oaks come from acorns. The reason is that somehow oaks are involved in acorns, and that which is involved can evolve. Now, young people, God is your Father—in a very real and genuine sense He is your Father—and therefore He is involved in you. If you will conduct yourselves properly, you may evolve into something like Him. But again I say, if we yield to the temptations to do what we ought not to do and continue to yield, then we will not develop and grow and unfold into our possibilities. That which is involved can evolve, and God is involved in *you*. I pray you resolve tonight that you are going to evolve into something like that from which you came.

### Know the Shepherd

I said it is a great thing to know the Shepherd. Some time ago a great actor in the city of New York gave a wonderful performance. There was thunderous applause at the end of the performance.

Some man in the audience thought he would like to hear this man read a scripture. He rose and said, “Sir, would you read for us the 23rd Psalm?”

Then the actor, being a great speaker as well as a great actor, said, “Why, yes, I know the words of the 23rd Psalm.” And as such a man would read, he did read that wonderful psalm. When he finished, again there was thunderous applause.

But the actor arose and signaled for silence and said, “I appreciate your response, but there is a man sitting down here whom I happen to know. He is an elderly man. I would like for your benefit to have him come and really read the 23rd Psalm.”

The old man, of course, was frightened, but he yielded to the invitation, staggered to the stand, and read as only such a man could read the 23rd Psalm. In quavering voice he said:

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

*He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

He sat down, and there was complete silence; many were wiping their eyes.

The great actor arose and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, as I told you, I know the *words* of the 23rd Psalm, but this man knows the *Shepherd*.”

Oh, what a difference!

### What Kind of Man Are You?

I pray you get acquainted with Him. Be true to Him—and thereby true to your parents, who love you so much. Some of you are freshmen, and this is your first time away from home. There is not a day that passes without your parents connecting your name with the name of God. Remember that and be worthy of their trust. Be unaffected by an association you may have with those who have, as they say, become somewhat sophisticated. Be unafraid to be yourself and to be your *better* self.

I think it is a very good thing for every man to examine himself occasionally—to stand himself up against the wall and look himself over and say to himself, “You’re an elder (a high priest, a seventy, or whatever). What kind of man are you?” and then to answer. Remember, you are talking to yourself, and you can’t deceive the man you are talking to, nor can you deceive God. Examine

yourself—your selfish self, your greedy self, your amorous self—and then try and find that inner self “that lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (D&C 93:2).

I pray that God will help us, that as we examine ourselves we may be unashamed and unafraid.

### **Drugs and the Adversary**

There is one awful thing that is happening in this world of ours today, and I am indebted to Truman Madsen for what I would like to read, if I may, having to do with the use of drugs. Some may think it unnecessary to mention that here, and yet I happen to know that it is making its inroads. And as I said, the adversary is doing everything in his power to get control of the minds and hearts and souls of men, and he wants the young people because you are the future leaders of the Church and of the world. If he can defeat you, he has won a great victory.

Many years ago the great American psychologist William James—all of you students have heard of him—performed an experiment on himself. Lacking, as he believed, any solid religious experience, he set out to induce some artificially by taking nitrous oxide, known as laughing gas. He came to have a series of unusual fantasies. Later he wrote a book entitled *The Varieties of Religious Experiences*. James began and ended with a scientific curiosity. (May I add that there are 75,000 addicts in New York who every day must have their drugs and have provisions being made to meet their necessities.) The nitrous oxide that James used is comparatively harmless, but many of today’s drugs are lethal. James saw his trial as artificial and superficial but in no way beneficial. I think that is a great testament coming from that type of man.

Many today, both among the impoverished and the elite, profess to have had all forms of religious experience while they were under the influence of drugs. For the life of me I cannot understand how any sane man or woman could presume that to deaden their natural God-given senses would enable them to have a religious experience. The ecstasy of religious experience comes from a clean soul, and only as we clean up our lives and

avoid the down-draws of drugs and other forms of deadening of the human intellect and soul are we going to be successful in what we undertake to do.

### **A Conversion to the Truth in England**

I would like to call your attention to what happens to a man in this Church when he is converted to the truth. I hope you are all converts. I was in a meeting not long ago, and I asked how many were converts. Probably 50 percent raised their hands. I said, “I advise the rest of you to get converted.”

You need to be converts. I would like to say this in passing, that in the years that have passed—and they are many—I have continued to be a convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and for that I thank God. He has been good to me in that He has headed me off when I would have gone my own way. He has known better than I knew what was good for me, and He has been willing and gracious to make provision for the things that He could see and that I couldn’t that would happen to me unless He took a part, and He took it. For this I am extremely grateful.

I said I have had contact with Him. In 1904 I went to England on a mission. President Heber J. Grant sent me down to Norwich. When I got into Norwich, the president of the district sent me down to Cambridge.

He said, “I want you to go with Elder Downs. [He was a man forty-five years old, and I was twenty-one years old.] Elder Downs will leave the morning after you get there for France because his mission is completed. There is not another Latter-day Saint within 120 miles of Cambridge, so you will be alone.” He said, “You might be interested to know, Brother Brown, that the last Mormon elder that was in Cambridge was driven out by a mob at the point of a gun and was told that the next Mormon elder that stepped inside the city limits would be shot on sight. I thought you would be glad to know that.”

I wasn’t glad to know it, but I thought it was well that I did know it.

We went to Cambridge. There were great signs all over the city—they had heard we were coming.

They had signs indicating their antipathy. That was their method of welcoming us. One big sign at the railway station was of a large man with a long beard and a woman lying at his feet with her head on a block. Underneath it said, "Will you go into polygamy or won't you?" That was the reception we received.

Elder Downs left the next morning after telling me how to prepare my tracts, and I went out on Friday morning and tracted all morning without any response except a slammed door in my face. I tracted all afternoon with the same response, and I came home pretty well discouraged. But I decided to tract Saturday morning, although it wasn't required. I went out and tracted all morning with the same results. I came home dejected and downhearted, and I thought I ought to go home. I thought the Lord had made a mistake in sending me to Cambridge.

I was sitting by that little alleged fire they have in England with a big granddaddy clock at the side of the so-called fire. I was feeling sorry for myself, and I heard a knock at the front door. The lady of the house answered the door.

I heard a voice say, "Is there an Elder Brown who lives here?"

I thought, "Oh, oh, here it is!"

She said, "Why, yes, he's in the front room. Come in, please."

A man came in and said, "Are you Elder Brown?"

I was not surprised that he was surprised. I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Did you leave this tract at my door?"

Well, my name and address were on it. Though I was attempting at that time to get ready to practice law, I didn't know how to answer him. I said, "Yes, sir, I did."

He said, "Last Sunday there were seventeen of us heads of families who left the Church of England. We went to my home, where I have a rather large room. Each of us has a large family, and we filled the large room with men, women, and children. We decided that we would pray all through the week that the Lord would send us a new pastor. When I came home tonight, I was discouraged; I thought our prayer had not been

answered. But when I found this tract under my door, I knew the Lord had answered our prayer. Will you come tomorrow night and be our new pastor?"

Now, I hadn't been in the mission field three days. I didn't know anything about missionary work, and he wanted me to be their pastor. But I was reckless enough to say, "Yes, I'll come." And I repented from then till the time of the meeting.

He left—and took my appetite with him! I called in the lady of the house and told her I didn't want any tea. I went up to my room and prepared for bed. I knelt at my bed. My young brothers and sisters, for the first time in my life I talked with God. I told Him of my predicament. I pleaded for His help. I asked Him to guide me. I pleaded that He would take it off my hands. I got up and went to bed and couldn't sleep, so I got out and prayed again. I kept that up all night—but I really talked with God.

The next morning I told the landlady I didn't want any breakfast, and I went up on the campus in Cambridge and walked all morning. I came in at noon and told her I didn't want any lunch. Then I walked all afternoon. I had a short-circuited mind—all that I could think of was that I had to go down there that night and be a pastor.

I came back to my room at six o'clock, and I sat there meditating, worrying, and wondering. (Let me tell you that since that time I have had the experience of sitting beside a man who was condemned to die the next morning. As I sat and watched his emotions, I was reminded of how I felt that night. I think I felt just as bad as he did. The execution time was drawing near.) Finally it came to the point where the clock said 6:45. I got up and put on my long Prince Albert coat and my stiff hat, which I had acquired in Norwich; took my walking cane, which we always carried in those days, and my kid gloves; put a Bible under my arm; and dragged myself down to that building—literally. I just made one track all the way.

Just as I got to the gate, the man came out—the man I had seen the night before. He bowed very politely and said, "Come in, Reverend, sir."

I had never been called that before. I went in, and I saw that the room was filled with people,



and they all stood up to honor their new pastor. That scared me to death.

Then I had come to the point where I began to think about what I had to do, and I realized I had to say something about singing. I suggested that we sing "O My Father." I was met with a blank stare. We sang it—it was a terrible cowboy solo. Then I thought, "If I could get these people to turn around and kneel by their chairs, they wouldn't be looking at me while I prayed."

I asked them if they would, and they responded readily. They all knelt down, and I knelt down. And for the second time in my life, I talked with God. All fear left me. I didn't worry anymore. I was turning it over to Him.

I said to Him, among other things, "Father in Heaven, these folks have left the Church of England. They have come here tonight to hear the truth. You know that I am not prepared to give them what they want, but Thou art, O God, the one who can. And if I can be an instrument through whom You speak, very well, but please take over."

When we arose, most of them were weeping, as was I. Wisely I dispensed with the second hymn, and I started to talk. I talked for forty-five minutes. I don't know what I said. I didn't talk—God spoke through me, as subsequent events proved. And He spoke so powerfully to that group that at the close of that meeting they came and put their arms around me and held my hands.

They said, "This is what we have been waiting for. Thank God you came."

I told you that I dragged myself down to that meeting. On my way back home that night, I only touched the ground once; I was so elated that God had taken off my hands an insuperable task for man.

Within three months every man, woman, and child in that audience was baptized a member of the Church. I didn't baptize them because I was transferred. But they all joined the Church, and most of them came to Utah and Idaho. I have seen some of them in recent years. They are elderly people now, but they say they never have attended such a meeting, a meeting where God spoke to them.

### A Legend from Longfellow

I read the other day again from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's works in his poem called "Morituri Salutamus," meaning, of course, "We who are about to die salute you." That would seem to be quite appropriate tonight. We who are about to die salute you young folks. I don't mean I am going to die tomorrow, but I think I will die within the next fifty years. In this poem Longfellow tells a legend. Most of you students perhaps have read it. I think you are not so familiar with Longfellow as we used to be, but I like the old fellow. He said this, and it is a description of what is happening in the world today:

*In medieval Rome, I know not where,  
There stood an image with its arm in air,  
And on its lifted finger, shining clear,  
A golden ring with the device, "Strike here!"  
Greatly the people wondered, though none guessed  
The meaning that these words but half expressed,  
Until a learned clerk, who at noonday  
With downcast eyes was passing on his way,  
Paused, and observed the spot, and marked it well,  
Whereon the shadow of the finger fell;  
And, coming back at midnight, delved, and found  
A secret stairway leading underground.  
Down this he passed into a spacious hall,  
Lit by a flaming jewel on the wall;  
And opposite, in threatening attitude,  
With bow and shaft a brazen statue stood.  
Upon its forehead, like a coronet,  
Were these mysterious words of menace set:  
"That which I am, I am; my fatal aim  
None can escape, not even yon luminous flame!"*

*Midway the hall was a fair table placed,  
With cloth of gold, and golden cups enchased  
With rubies, and the plates and knives were gold,  
And gold the bread and viands manifold.  
Around it, silent, motionless, and sad,  
Were seated gallant knights in armor clad,  
And ladies beautiful with plume and zone,  
But they were stone, their hearts within were stone;  
And the vast hall was filled in every part  
With silent crowds, stony in face and heart.*

*Long at the scene, bewildered and amazed  
The trembling clerk in speechless wonder gazed;  
Then from the table, by his greed made bold,  
He seized a goblet and a knife of gold,  
And suddenly from their seats the guests upsprang,  
The vaulted ceiling with loud clamors rang,  
The archer sped his arrow, at their call,  
Shattering the lambent jewel on the wall,  
And all was dark around and overhead;—  
Stark on the floor the luckless clerk lay dead!*

*The writer of this legend then records  
Its ghostly application in these words:  
The image is the Adversary old,  
Whose beckoning finger points to realms of gold;  
Our lusts and passions are the downward stair  
That leads the soul from a diviner air;  
The archer, Death; the flaming jewel, Life;  
Terrestrial goods, the goblet and the knife;  
The knights and ladies, all whose flesh and bone  
By avarice have been hardened into stone;  
The clerk, the scholar whom the love of pelf  
Tempts from his books and from his nobler self.*

*The scholar and the world! The endless strife,  
The discord in the harmonies of life!  
The love of learning, the sequestered nooks,  
And all the sweet serenity of books;  
The market-place, the eager love of gain,  
Whose aim is vanity, and whose end is pain!*

*But why, you ask me, should this tale be told  
To men grown old, or who are growing old?  
It is too late! Ah, nothing is too late  
Till the tired heart shall cease to palpitate.*

“Cato learned Greek at eighty,” and Longfellow tells of several others who did their best work after they had reached more than fourscore years. He then adds:

*These are indeed exceptions; but they show  
How far the gulf-stream of our youth may flow  
Into the arctic regions of our lives,  
Where little else than life itself survives.*  
[Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Morituri Salutamus” (1875)]

I think we need to learn a lesson from these solemn words: “the luckless clerk lay dead” because of greed.

I’ll read another poem:

*Wealth is not the things we own,  
A stately house upon a hill,  
Paintings, rugs and tapestries,  
Or servants hired to do one’s will.  
In luxury a man may dwell  
Lonely as in a prison cell.*

*Wealth is not a plenteous purse  
Or bonds that one has stored away,  
A boastful balance in a bank  
Or jewelled trinkets fools display;  
The things that really satisfy  
Are things that money cannot buy.*

*Wealth is health, a cheerful heart,  
An ear that hears a robin’s song,  
A mind content, some treasured friends  
And fragrant memories lingering long.  
Living is an inward art,  
All lasting wealth is in the heart!*

[Alfred Grant Walton, “Wealth,” in *Lyrics for Living* (Francestown, New Hampshire: Golden Quill Press, 1963), 45]

### **A Special Witness**

One of the things that President McKay says to all the men who are called to the Council of the Twelve is this: “You are to become a witness of Jesus the Christ, a special witness. Wherever you go you are to bear that witness and bless the people.”

My young friends, with all the solemnity of my soul, speaking from the very center of my heart, I say to you, knowing that I am on the very brink of eternity, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. He is pleading tonight for you, His younger brothers and sisters. He is the Son of the living God. He has come again in our time, and He will come again and rule and reign on this earth for a thousand years of universal peace known as the Millennium. That time is coming, and—by reason of the

determination to avoid the down-drag of life—they who are worthy will be caught up to meet Him when He comes.

I plead with you that you will watch every act and every word and every thought. Remember, you are the captain of your own soul. You cannot blame others who may tempt you. It is up to you. Young ladies, behave yourselves as ladies, and young men, treat them as ladies. Do not degrade one another by immoral and unrighteous actions.

Heavenly Father, wilt thou bless this wonderful audience of young people. Let Thy Spirit be with each of them that they may know of Thy presence and be lifted up thereby, that they may keep themselves clean and pure in Thy sight, so that when the Savior shall come again, they may be numbered among those who are worthy to meet Him at His coming. I pray for this blessing upon you and leave you this testimony and my own special blessing humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.