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⁴Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 660.

⁵Bible Dictionary, *The Holy Bible* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), p. 621.

⁶See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft), vol. 1, p. 359.

⁷Regarding the variance of the sacramental liquid from wine to water, see D&C 27:2 and section heading.

⁸Mark E. Petersen, *Prayer* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1977), p. 67.

⁹Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 385-86.

¹⁰Melvin J. Ballard, "The Sacramental Covenant," *Improvement Era*, 22:1026.

¹¹Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 386.

¹²David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, p. 72.

¹³Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City, Utah: 1955), vol. 2, p. 338.

¹⁴David O. McKay, Conference Report, Oct. 1929, pp. 14-15.

¹⁵Joseph Fielding Smith, *Selections from Answers to Gospel Questions* (1972-73 Melchizedek Priesthood Quorum Study Guide), pp. 169-70.

¹⁶Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pp. 226-27.

¹⁷David O. McKay, *True to the Faith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 233.

¹⁸David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, p. 145.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 71.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Having A Testimony of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ

Chauncey C. Riddle

The purpose of this paper is to describe the nature of a testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. To have a testimony is to know for a certainty that that message is a true message from the true and living God. An understanding of testimony is seen here as an invaluable aid in gaining and strengthening a testimony, should one desire to do so.

Two thousand years ago when Jesus of Nazareth hung crucified in the Roman province of Judea for everyone to see, there were two distinct interpretations of what was being seen. Some saw the Son of God, the Savior of all mankind, hanging in agony to do the Father's will. Others saw a pretender from Galilee who had blasphemed God by claiming to be his son and was receiving his just reward. That difference is a witness to the principle that human knowledge does not come by sight only. And it emphasizes the importance of knowing for a surety in all matters of moment. Can we be sure, and if so, how? To answer those questions we must examine what we know about human knowledge. What we are concerned about is the common sense about human knowledge: those matters to which every intelligent, observant human being is able to assent. You, the reader, are called upon as a witness to the truth of the following account.

1. Human beings and human knowledge.

We note first that the human being has two parts or aspects. First, there is the outer part wherein the human body plays a conspicuous role; here we humans observe, touch, and communicate about the external world in which we live. This world consists of the

earth and nature, other persons, and the human artifacts which compass us. The second part of a human being is the inner world of our own personal thoughts, feelings, and desires; in it are the good, the holy, and the beautiful as well as the bad, the evil, and the ugly. The first is the public arena in which we act and react with the physical universe. The second is the private realm of our ideas, ideals, dreams, and plans. Both of these realms are important. Were we to fail to function relative to either we would be in serious difficulty. Abdication in the private realm is to cease to be autonomous and to become an externally controlled and motivated automaton. Neglect of the public realm fosters incompetence, which in the extreme is called insanity. But normal coping with human life is a careful integration of these two, a cooperative personal response of an intelligent and feeling inner self as it deals with important ideas and values and relates them to the opportunities and demands of an external, real world through a real physical tabernacle. In a world of challenges, opportunities, and dangers, one must draw heavily upon each and coordinate them in order to meet those challenges and dangers successfully and to capitalize on one's opportunities.

Corresponding to those two aspects of the human being are two kinds of knowledge or belief. (Much of what we think we know is but belief.) In the public, outer realm we have ideas about the physical world, other people, and things. These ideas we gain through communication with other persons whom we respect (authority), from our thinking about what others say—especially noting that others don't agree in what they tell us (reason), from our own sensory observations about the outside world (empiricism), and from our noting which ideas and procedures seem to work in the world (pragmatics). We take in evidences from all these sources, knead them into a unified picture of the world and file that picture in our memory. We update or correct that picture at will. That picture is our reality, the best we can do in relating to reality. Some of us are very careful, searching out evidence and piecing the evidence into a consistent whole with diligence. Others of us are fairly casual about the whole thing, not even minding inconsistencies and gaps, changing our ideas only when painful necessity forces us to amend our expectations of the world.

The other kind of knowledge, the personal sort, is very different. It is heavily involved in values, ideals, desires, and satisfactions. Perhaps the most important facet of this inner world is our experience of the holy. Many persons have a sense that there is

something special, something deserving of reverence within their inner realm of consciousness. This may or may not have been initially influenced by other persons. But every human being must cope with this influence and learn on his own how it acts and reacts in his own inner world. What each person needs to learn and will learn if attentive is what happens when he or she yields to the influence of the holy. Part of that learning comes from contrasting yielding to the enticements of that which the inner self feels to be evil, opposing the holy in oneself. Each of us also experiments with yielding to our own desires, trying to ignore feelings of good and bad, right and wrong. Sometimes we don't even make decisions: we just let things happen. Out of all these experiments and experiences we learn much about ourselves, about what brings happiness and what brings unhappiness, and about that which is prudent, desirable, and effective.

Since each of us is a person who operates in two worlds, our minds must integrate these two kinds of knowledge in order for us not to be double-minded. That integration is an ideal, perhaps never fully completed. The struggle to gain correct notions in each realm and then to correlate them is the challenge of human life, the basis of drama and pathos, happiness and joy.

It is important to note that the experiences we have as humans do not uniquely determine what we believe either in the outer or the inner world. Our own desires are important. Our desires enable us to search for the kind of evidence which we wish to have, to reject evidence which goes contrary to our desires, and to integrate only those materials which we wish to, and to the degree to which we desire. We literally create our own universe within the bounds of those experiences which are too painful for us to ignore. Those bounds are quite generous, allowing us much freedom. Each person's synthesis of the universe is thus a genuine reflection of his or her own desires.

But if desire is a powerful selecting and ordering factor, so must be our minds. Because much of the evidence we gain from other humans is contradictory, because reason itself is captive to the premises which we furnish it, because our senses do give us ambiguous reports, because what works is never a sure indication of what is, and because we can fool ourselves as to what really happens inside our personal world, we must use all of the power of mind and discernment that we can bring to bear. Scepticism is our friend, insisting that we duplicate evidence, that we rethink, that we probe

and try and experiment afresh, that we challenge every idea. Only a healthy scepticism enables us to separate the true and the good from the welter of appearance and opinion. But scepticism, too, can exceed its proper bounds. As it cuts it may begin to decimate that which is reliable and substantial. If we let it, if we so desire, it easily slips into a cynicism that indiscriminately derogates everything. Each of us must balance faith with incredulity, trust with wariness, exuberance with soberness, creativity with responsibility, passion with temperance, hope with realism. Only thus can we create an understanding of the world which will allow us those successes we desire.

2. Knowledge in matters of religion.

Let us then suppose that we have become intelligent, coping individuals, that we are making a reasonably good stab at being responsible persons, that we are assets to our communities, and that we are intelligent about truth and value. Our synthesis of the two kinds of knowledge is then beginning to serve our needs and challenges. In this state of intelligent awareness of the universe we are basically prepared to address the most important kinds of questions, those of religion. For religion is about ourselves. What kind of person should we make of ourselves? What habits of feeling and valuing, of thinking and believing, of doing and making should we foster in ourselves? Our own habits are our character. Our character is the most precious achievement and construction of our mortal existence.

Let us further suppose that our challenge is to ascertain the truthfulness of that particular religion, the restored gospel, church, and priesthood of Jesus Christ as revealed first to the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., and then to a host of others in these latter days. Specifically, let us focus on how one can know that the restored gospel is the true message about salvation for all men from the true and living God. For that message to be true one would need to gather and synthesize enough information to be sure that there is a true and living God, our Father in Heaven, who has sent us his beloved, only begotten Son, whom we should hear. What we hear is that we should believe in the Son, repent of all our sins, choose faithful obedience to him as our sole means of acting, and strive to become perfect in our character (to endure to the end)—all under the personal companionship and tutelage of the Holy Spirit and through the ordinances administered by the authorized priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While that seems much to prove, it all

boils down to one principal feature: Does the Holy Ghost bear witness to our inner self of the truthfulness of these things? As we begin to obey, does that Holy Spirit continue to guide us in paths that we ourselves, judging by our own sense of what is holy, know are good and true?

As there are two kinds of evidence and knowledge about things in general, so there are two kinds pertaining to the hypothesis that the restored gospel is true. We shall examine each of these kinds of evidences in turn, beginning with the evidences from the external world.

The first kind of evidence which comes to bear is that of authority. What do the responsible, intelligent people whom we know who have investigated the restored gospel say about it? If they assure us that it is true, we have an important piece of evidence. If they bear negative witness, we must also account for that. But we can only make responsible judgments about other person's testimonies, positive or negative, when we have gained further evidence of other kinds on our own. We need to have independent evidence as to whether or not the restored gospel is true or false before we can evaluate any person's testimony. The testimony of other persons is always inconclusive if there is no other evidence available.

Next is the evidence of reason. What kinds of answers to theological questions go with the restored gospel? Are those answers self-consistent? Are they consistent with the Holy Bible? Is the Book of Mormon consistent with the Holy Bible? Is there a completeness of answers so that every important question has an answer? Is there some consistency about the answers which authorities of the restored Church give? As our reason searches and compares it begins either to be satisfied or dissatisfied. To become either is an important kind of evidence. But this evidence is not conclusive. We can evaluate it only when we get more information from other sources. We cannot know if we should be satisfied or dissatisfied until we know on other grounds whether the restored gospel is true. Then we can evaluate our own reasoning.

We turn to observation. What can our senses tell us of the truth of the restored gospel? They can tell us that there is an interesting artifact produced by Joseph Smith that we can examine: the Book of Mormon. As we read and examine it, we must ask: Whence came this volume? Could a person who never attended school fabricate out of his imagination such a complex, detailed history which is so internally consistent and which fits into the historical and

geographical evidence of today, much of which was not even known to the world in 1830? Detractors of Joseph Smith are unanimous on one point: he was too ignorant to have written it. By whom or how, then, did it come into being? So far the only proffered explanation that fits the known historical facts is the one given by Joseph Smith himself: he received it as a revealed translation of writing on ancient plates of gold. What of the three witnesses who also saw the plates? Their testimony must count for something, especially since each in turn was excommunicated from that Church, yet none ever denied his testimony. There is sufficient meat here for every intelligent mind to cogitate upon. Yet this area is in itself not conclusive, even if we find that we cannot discount Joseph Smith's explanation of the book. We must yet seek further evidence.

Another kind of observation which is important is the order of the universe. The motions of the heavens, the intricacy of the plant and animal orders, the complexity and perfection of the human species all raise questions as to their origin and maintenance. Do these things bespeak the hand of a great creator, or are they simply the blind career of chance concatenations of atoms? Some persons are convinced one way, some the other. The net result is that we see again that observation needs interpretation: no set of empirical evidence is self-interpretive or self-warranting. We must seek elsewhere for surety while not forgetting our observations.

Turning to consideration of pragmatics, we see that there are seeming sociological consequences of accepting the restored gospel. Those who profess belief in the restored gospel have marriage, divorce, birth, and death statistics that are different from the public at large. They seem to have a distinctive cultural pattern that is in accord with the New Testament standards. They prosper wherever they go if they are left alone. These are interesting and valuable correlations. But they do not prove the case. We must yet seek further evidence.

We see that none of the four external kinds of evidence yields unambiguous assurance of the truthfulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. While their combination is more powerful than any type by itself, even that conjunction does not yield solid proof. The reason is that each of these is an external evidence. The essence of the restored gospel concerns what goes on inside a person, not outside. We must then turn our attention to the inner realm, not forgetting nor discounting the outer realm, but holding its evidence in abeyance for the moment.

Inner knowledge concerns the personal private experiments which a person can perform. Before one can experiment he must either believe or desire to believe. One must risk something. This is not to suggest that one must persist in blind faith. But one must begin with the hope that God will answer his prayers. If one believes or desires to believe, he can at least perform the experiments. The experiments will give evidence which will become so sure that his faith is not blind ever after. Each person who is willing to experiment can determine for himself whether the gospel hypothesis is just another romantic dream or is truly a reality.

With at least temporary belief, one can then perform the crucial experiment, which is to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, ready to do whatever one is instructed to do. If one has not already received it upon hearing the message of the restored gospel, the first message from God will likely be that peaceful, burning assurance which the Holy Spirit gives that the restored gospel is indeed true. What one must then do is to believe even more. To believe even more is to pray again, to thank the Father, and to ask what to do next. As the next instruction comes and the experimenter obeys in faith, he embarks upon a path that is rewarding and satisfying. That cycle of belief, prayer, revelation, and obedience is so self-reinforcing and so satisfying to those who delight in doing the will of God that they never need seek for the path of progress again. They need only to persevere. Now they know that the restored gospel is true, for its promise has been delivered. They have received the promised Holy Spirit unto faith and repentance. Because their souls are enlarged and the yearning for and the guidance of the holy in their lives is now satisfied, they know they are on the path of pleasing God and of coming to Him.

Faithful prayer leads to promptings that come even when one is not praying or meditating. These promptings come in the same voice and with the same peaceful assurance as the answers to prayer. To experiment with following them is the course of intelligence for those who have enjoyed that companionship of the Holy Spirit. As again they experiment they learn the rewards of further sensitivity to the holy. They also learn to compare the results of yielding to those promptings to yielding to their own desires, especially when those personal desires are abetted by that opposing evil spirit which enjoins selfishness upon one. The knowledge that comes from faithful obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit reinforces and buttresses the already sure knowledge one has from answers to

prayers.

To promptings are added special insights, understandings, and interpretations. As one ponders the gospel message and searches the scriptures many questions arise. As these arise the answers also often flow, sometimes because of prayer, sometimes without asking. What they bring is a completeness, a comprehensive overview of the world and the universe as God would have us see them. We begin to understand that nothing is wasted in the economy of our God, that all truth is interconnected, that everything works for the good of those who love the God of righteousness. The satisfaction of understanding and the esthetics of glimpsing the greatness and the goodness of the divine system help us to begin to understand ourselves for the first time and to know even more surely the truthfulness of the restored gospel.

Understanding brings a comprehension of man's potential, a vision of what he could become through the gifts and promises of God. As these gifts are sought and used for the work of godliness there comes an understanding of God's power and a realization of the promises. As healings, miracles, tongues and interpretation of tongues, prophecy, discernment, power over the elements, and nobility in the soul show forth the handiwork of God, knowledge builds upon knowledge, and the established, buttressed, well-founded edifice becomes so sure and secure that no power of man or of hell can shake it.

The import of this discussion is that a testimony, a sure knowledge of the truth of the restored gospel can only come in the inner, personal knowledge of a person. What then is the place of the external evidences? They do have their place.

3. The weaving of a testimony.

Let us now change the figure of speech from a building to a fabric and discuss the weaving of that fabric. The beginning of the weaving process is to establish the warp. These are the strong threads, the real substance of the cloth, and they are usually anchored at each end in a vertical row, then spread alternately in two directions to provide space for the shuttle to draw through the horizontal threads of the woof. If the threads of the weaving are fine yet strong and carefully spaced yet tightly woven, a cloth of superior utility is created.

We may liken the strong warp threads of a cloth to the internal evidences which come from our own personal experiments with the holy and the evil, the good and the bad. If we perform those

experiments with sceptical care we will accept only those evidences or threads which are strong, true, and reliable. We must also avoid the cynicism which would have us discard that which we perceive surely to be true. And we must have enough threads to mass a sufficient warp. After one experiment we know almost nothing. But after thousands and thousands of experiments we know that we can trust the Lord. As we marshall those threads in a record of the actual experiences which created them, we create a warp of substance, strength, and capacity.

To the warp we may now add the woof threads of the external evidences that we previously gathered but found to be insufficient of themselves. We have many or few of these strands, but obviously, more and stronger threads are better. These are the testimonies of others, the reasoning we have done to observe the consistency and completeness of the restored gospel, the observations we have made of the handiwork of God both through men and in the natural order of the universe around us, capped by the practical evidence of the utility of living the restored gospel. These evidences, though not sufficiently strong of themselves to constitute a testimony, when carefully woven into the strands of strong and sure knowledge, become genuine assets to the whole. Then one can know which doctrines are found to be consistent and can reject the unwanted baggage of the doctrines of men which becloud the matter. Then one can see that it is truly the hand of God which brought the Bible and the Book of Mormon into existence and which has created and does now maintain the starry heavens and the course of nature. Then one can see that the wicked are punished by their own hands and that the righteous reap the rewards of the children of God. To have a testimony is to live, to see, and to know in ways never available to persons who do not have a testimony.

Should one weave such a fabric of strength and beauty it will serve him well. For such a testimony is not gained by taking thought; it is not the product of observation, but of doing the will of God. It is a personally constructed artifact made of individually experienced items selected with the greatest of care and the highest standards. It is not just a cloth, as it is not just a knowing. It becomes the robe of righteousness, that which every soul must have to attend the wedding feast. It is the newly formed character, the fiber of the being of a son or a daughter of God. What we are is what we do and what we know. Our own character is the robe of righteousness which enables us to dwell in eternal burnings. To be saved is to receive the

divine gifts that are necessary and to weave a new character for ourselves in the pattern of the divine nature of our Christ himself; then He can present us spotless before the Father. To gain a testimony is to repent, to create a new self through faith in Jesus Christ.

The necessity of the connection between testimony and righteousness is found in the nature of God himself. He is a God of truth, but truth without righteousness is a monster. Thus, he is first a God of righteousness and then a God of truth. Those who wish to become as he is must follow that same order. He promises to fully satisfy the desire of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. He has no kind words for those who are merely curious. Creating a testimony means doing the works of righteousness. In the process of doing those works one comes to know and understand first the truth of his own inner experience and feelings, then the truth about this physical world in which we live; after that he may learn of heavenly things beyond the ken of mere mortals if he asks in faith. Righteousness is of Christ, for he is the sole fountain of righteousness in this earth, as also he is the Spirit of Truth. To love righteousness is to seek and to gain a testimony of the restored gospel, which then enables one to do the works of righteousness.

The perfect example of the necessity of seeking a testimony through righteousness is found in the lives of Laman and Lemuel. Each of them was furnished with an abundance of evidence of divine things: they saw and heard an angel, they saw miracles, they felt the power of God shock them, their lives were saved by divine intervention. Yet they gained no testimony from their experiences because those experiences were not part of the experimentation of faith. The whole of these experiences was in the external world—to them. They did not seek the Lord in the inner realm and thus had no evidence in the inner realm of their own souls. They could interpret away all of the external evidence and did so. They simply refused to repent. After this world, in the spirit prison or at the bar of judgment, they will have enough evidence to know that the gospel is true and will finally admit to that truth. But then it will be too late to show sufficient love for the Lord and for righteousness to be saved in the celestial kingdom.

4. Questions and answers.

1. What are the qualities of a testimony? A strong testimony is

one in which the bearer has certainty that the God of Heaven hears and answers his prayers as he attempts to live the restored gospel. Only those with strong testimonies are able to make the sacrifices that the Lord requires to perfect their souls. A weak testimony is one in which the bearer has as yet little confidence; enough perhaps to continue experimentation and exploration, but not enough to stand tribulation nor the finger of scorn. A sure testimony is one in which the bearer has amassed enough internal evidence to surmount all reasonable doubt that the restored gospel is true. A strong testimony is an assurance of the heart; a sure testimony is an assurance of the mind. A present testimony is one that is a living present companionship with the Holy Spirit. A past testimony is the memory of marvelous former experiences with the Holy Spirit. A strong and sure and present testimony enables one to live by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God.

2. What then can a person do to strengthen his own testimony? Gaining and strengthening a testimony begins with the heart. If a person does not desire to be righteous, he needs to repent until he has that desire. When his heart is right, he will search for those whisperings of the spirit which are the precious lifeline to all godly things. Sensing their holiness, he will begin to follow the whisperings unto doing the works enjoined, thus becoming a person of some degree of faith. Though he might encounter negative evidence, such as the contrary witness of other persons, seeming contradictions, and venality on the part of professed members of the restored Church, his own faith in the whisperings will lay positive spiritual evidence beside each of those negative externals until he sees that the truth of the gospel shines through the spotty facade of those negative impressions. Each person is free. Anyone who desires the negative to predominate will have it so. But anyone who treasures that which is honest, true, virtuous, of good report, and praiseworthy will soon find that his joy in his own increased ability to do the works that the Savior commends far outweighs the negative. The Holy Spirit reveals that those who bear negative testimony of the gospel are under the influence of the adversary; their negative testimony is thus a backhanded positive testimony of the gospel's truthfulness. Seeming contradictions become the occasion for greater understanding in which the marvels and mysteries of the gospel are unfolded to the faithful seeker, thus becoming a positive strength to this testimony. The venality of Church members when interpreted by the Holy Spirit becomes an occasion for sympathy for those persons, a further

attestation that the way of righteousness and truth is straight and narrow indeed, and few there be that find it.

So, do I keep the Sabbath day holy? Do I honor my parents with all that the Holy Spirit enjoins? Am I honest in all of my dealings with my fellowmen, pressing down, shaking, and heaping up the measure which I give them? Do I reach out to the poor in money, strength, wisdom, understanding, and honor, sharing with them out of the abundance of heart, mind, strength, and substance with which the Lord has blessed me? Do I fill very mission gladly, exuberant and wise in the assurance that I have of the merits of my Master? Do I love my spouse, my children, and my neighbors with that same pure love that the gods of heaven shower upon me? Do I do all things unto the Lord, knowing that I am his but have no merit, wisdom, or goodness of my own? Do I fulfill my Savior's instruction in the faith of love so that I can overcome the forces of this world? Do I allow my conscience to smite me down to humility and repentance whenever the thorns of selfishness or arrogance snag my robe?

Every decision of daily life affords me the opportunity to prove that good and acceptable will of my God. As I add faith to faith, obeying in humility in every decision I make from moment to moment, the gifts and blessings and rewards of God flow so abundantly that I come to realize that in the path of such faith I never need hunger or thirst again. He who loves purely is sufficient to my every need. I need to search and wonder no more except to be sure that I continue to please him. I neither doubt nor flounder. I know I am on the path. I must only endure to the end, until my faithful service has brought me to the measure of the stature of the fullness of my Savior, for he is the end, indeed.

3. Is it possible for me to talk myself into a testimony, to desire one so much that I create a false testimony? That surely is possible, just as a person might believe that he is Napoleon or is invisible. But the evidences would not be there. Neither internally nor externally would sufficient confirmations come to allow one to believe a false testimony to be a true one unless one is unable to evaluate evidence. Some persons are clearly unable to evaluate evidence, even in the external, physical world. They do indeed often come to strange opinions about religious matters. That is why it is important to establish one's sanity in the realm of ordinary, earthly matters before one attempts to stand as a witness to anyone else of the truth of sacred, spiritual matters. Our Savior, knowing the sometimes precarious nature of new faith and testimony, has assured us that he

will always establish his word in the mouths of two or three witnesses. Sometimes those witnesses are several kinds of internal and external evidence, which then give us a firm rock upon which to stand.

4. Is it possible to transfer a testimony? It is never possible to share the essence of our testimony with another person, for that essence exists in the private, inner realm which can never be shared. But our sincere and truthful witness, though external to our hearers and therefore a sandy foundation for their testimonies, may be accompanied by the second witness of the Holy Spirit. That second witness is internal, the essence of real testimony. On that rock they can proceed to build surely.

5. Which concepts are closely associated with that of testimony and would assist one to gain a better understanding of testimony? Testimony is a type of knowledge. Similar concepts are those of evidence, assurance, record, monument, and proof. Contrary concepts are those of doubt, discredit, counterindicativeness, and insecurity. The complement concept is that of uncertainty. The opposite is complete ignorance. The perfection of testimony is full knowledge of complete certainty. The prerequisites for testimony are (1) revelation from God, (2) belief in that revelation, and (3) obedience to the instructions of that revelation. (Those are the elements of faith, for faith is the prerequisite to testimony.) The constituents of testimony are the internal and external evidences for the truthfulness of the restored gospel that we have gained and see through the eye of faith. A celestial testimony (the only kind that saves anyone) is based squarely on an abundance of cooperative experience with the Holy Spirit. A terrestrial testimony is based on an abundance of external, physical evidence for the truthfulness of the restored gospel. A telestial testimony is based on a fear that it might be true and an unwillingness to search out the evidence, either internal or external. A perdition testimony is that of a person who knows full well that the restored gospel is true (a past sure testimony), but bears witness to others that it is not true.

5. Summary and conclusions.

A. The essence of a testimony of the restored gospel is present, inner, continuous cooperation with the Holy Spirit in the cause of relieving misery in this world (the work of righteousness). Public, physical evidence about the restored gospel is helpful only when

carefully evaluated by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and useful only when tightly woven into our continuous, inner, present cooperation with the Holy Spirit. The function of external evidence in the cause of righteousness is not to assure anyone of the truthfulness of the gospel, but to attract attention to the restored gospel so that a person will personally perform the inner experiments which do bring a sure testimony.

B. Testimony comes only through faith. When we hear the gospel, our first evidence that it is the word of the Lord comes as we receive the internal witness of the Holy Spirit that it is true. If we then act on that witness, asking to know what to do about our doubts—asking anything in the willingness to believe and obey the holy within us, we ask in faith. Asking in faith brings the revelations of the true and living God to anyone who will so ask. Out of these revelations is born the abundance of experience that assures us of the reliability of God’s revelations—which is a testimony.

C. Only hunger and thirst for righteousness is a sufficient motive to experiment on the gospel message in faith. Those whose only interest in the gospel is an academic curiosity can never perform the experiments in faith. No amount of external evidence can, will, or should convince them of the truthfulness of that message. The gospel message is aimed specifically at the sheep: those who live first to love others, as does the true and living God.

D. A testimony is always a construction, a personal artifact. It is built out of a person’s life experiences and is the record of what that person has sought, hoped for, and selected out of the welter of opportunities that this world affords. If a person has received the personal witness that the restored gospel is true, then that person’s testimony, positive or negative, is a clear reflection of that person’s character.

E. A testimony is always nontransferrable. While one may indeed bear witness of his inner experience, that inner experience forever remains his private domain. But as one bears true witness, the Holy Spirit can and will witness to the hearers of the truth of that person’s witness, which is the beginning material for the testimony of each of those hearers. To some it is given to believe on the testimony of those who know.

F. Any person who has a sure testimony of the restored gospel, and thus of the Holy Spirit, can endure by means of the laws and ordinances of the gospel to a sure knowledge of the Son and of the Father. But one must endure in faith.

CHAPTER EIGHT A New Commandment

George W. Pace

Perhaps you would not argue with me when I say that one of the greatest recorded visions God has ever given is Lehi’s vision of the tree of life and Nephi’s interpretation of that vision.

Obviously, the central object of that dream is the tree of life; the central experience of that dream is the partaking of the fruit of the tree of life. Perhaps not so immediately obvious is that in reality, aside from symbolism, the tree of life is Jesus Christ and that Lehi, in partaking of the fruit, tasted or experienced the majesty of the Savior’s atonement.

Nephi’s already intense appetite for the things of the spirit increased as his father unfolded the vision. For Nephi then “was desirous that he might see and hear and know of those things by the power of the Holy Ghost” (1 Nephi 10:17). Nephi was then shown the tree, and he immediately declared that “the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the driven snow” (1 Nephi 11:8).

Having seen the tree and knowing that the tree was representative of the love of God, Nephi wanted to grasp more fully what his father had experienced. He inquired further and was shown Mary, “a virgin most beautiful and fair above all virgins” (1 Nephi 11:15). Mary was then carried away in the spirit for a period of time, reappearing to Nephi’s view while holding the Christ child in her arms.

As the vision continued, Nephi saw the Savior’s life, mission, and atonement. He saw the Savior—teaching, healing, sorrowing. He saw people spitting on him and trampling him under their feet; he saw further a world court judging the Savior to be a thing of naught (see 1 Nephi 19:9). In short, Nephi *experienced* the awful greatness of the Savior’s atonement. He came to know, as did his father, that the greatest manifestation of God’s love is in the redemptive gift of his