

Elder Boyd K. Packer, 23 April 1985 — Bruce R. McConkie Funeral

... President [Harold B.] Lee told me on one occasion how the passing of one certain member of the Twelve had affected him more deeply than had any other. Now I understand. I cannot express the loneliness and the deep personal loss I feel.

Brother [Bruce R.] McConkie and I shared a witness that, I have come to believe, few men share. I could, and I did, speak more openly to him of sacred things than any other man....

To me there was one great crowning contribution and achievement in Brother McConkie's ministry. Some may not agree, because he accomplished and contributed so many things. But I am sure, quite sure of this: If ever there was a man who was raised up unto a very purpose; if ever a man was prepared again a certain need, it was Bruce R. McConkie. It had to do with the scriptures.

All members of the Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve had important work to do in the publication of the new editions of the scriptures with all of the aids, the footnotes, the corrections, the Topical Guide, the dictionaries, the indexes, the reversifications, the new chapter headings [all written by Bruce R. McConkie], additional revelations, and more.

This work, while hardly appreciated yet, will one day emerge as a signal inspired event of our generation. Because of it, we shall raise up generations of Latter-day Saints who will know the gospel and know the Lord.

Brother Monson and I served for years on the Scriptures Publication Committee with Brother McConkie. I know full well that the work could have been accomplished without me. I venture to suggest, as well, that Brother Monson was not crucial to that work.

But it could not have been done without Elder Bruce R. McConkie. Few will ever know the extent of the service he rendered. Few can appraise the lifetime of preparation for this quiet crowning contribution to the onrolling of the restored gospel in the dispensation of the fulness of times....

When he was called as a General Authority, I am sure there were snide remarks about nepotism, for he had married the daughter of Joseph Fielding Smith of the Council of Twelve Apostles.

They did not know that the President of the Church had kept his call from her father [Joseph Fielding Smith] until it had to be announced. If they could not see then, can they see now that in that union this chosen man was brought under the constant tutelage of Joseph Fielding Smith, scriptionian, son of a prophet, grandson of Hyrum [Smith] the Patriarch, a prophet himself? ...

If you know ecclesiastical history at all, if you know the dealings of the Lord with men and of men with men, you should not be surprised that the one characteristic which the Lord pressed upon him was the very thing that many, even some close to him, misunderstood. As is often true, the great ones are not fully understood or appreciated while they live.

Perhaps one day we will see how great a man has walked among us. He was not less than Elder Talmage nor the others we revere from the past. His sermons and writings will live on. In these, he will live longer than any of us. The scriptures have something to say about testimonies being in fuller force after the death of the testator.

His manner of delivery was unique, with something of an Old Testament scriptural quality about them.

It was not granted to Brother McConkie to judge beforehand how his discourses would be received and then to alter them accordingly. He could not measure what ought to be said and how it ought to be said by, "What will people think?" Would his sermons leave any uncomfortable? Would his bold declarations irritate some in the Church? Would they inspire the critics to rush to their anvils and hammer out more "fiery darts" as the scriptures call them?

Would his manner of delivery offend? Would his forthright declarations, in content or in manner of

presentation, drive some learned investigator away?
Would he be described as insensitive or overbearing?

Would his warnings and condemnations of evil undo the careful work of others whose main intent was to have the world "think well of the Church"?

Perhaps it was given to other men to so measure their words in that way, but it was not given to him. We have talked about this. And when he was tempted to change, the Spirit would withdraw a distance and there would come that deep loneliness known only to those who have enjoyed close association with the Spirit, only to find on occasion that it moves away. He could stand what the critics might say and what enemies might do, but he could not stand that. He would be driven to his knees to beg forgiveness and plead for the renewal of that companionship with the Spirit which the scriptures promise can be constant. Then he would learn once again that what was true of Holy Men of God who spake in ancient times applied to him as well. He was to speak as he was moved upon by the Holy Spirit. What matter if it sounded like Bruce R. McConkie, so long as the Lord approved. I knew him well enough to know all of that....

President Kimball has spoken in public of his gratitude to Elder McConkie for some special support he received in the days leading up to the revelation on the priesthood....

Where is Bruce McConkie now? He is with his Lord. When the refining process is complete, I know something of how he will appear. He will be glorious! What will he do? Whatever the Lord wills him to do....

Now he is gone. What will we do without him? Others, of course, will receive the fiery darts fashioned on the anvil of the adversary. And, in his own words, "the wagon train will move on." His Brethren will share the extra burden and "the wagon train will move on!" ...

President Wilford Woodruff included this sentence in his last will and testament:

"If the laws of the spirit would permit, and I shall be governed by them, I should like to attend my own funeral."

And I have known other occasions when that was permitted. Should Bruce be here, I should say:

God bless you, our beloved Brother Bruce R. McConkie. We love you deeply, we know that you now are with Him. God grant that all of us may finish the race as you have done and that one day where He is, and where you are, we may be also ...