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*Standing  
for  
Something*

TEN NEGLECTED VIRTUES  
THAT WILL HEAL OUR  
HEARTS AND HOMES

GORDON B. HINCKLEY

*Foreword by Mike Wallace*

T I M E S  B O O K S

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R A N D O M   H O U S E

# Introduction

## The Secularization of America

*If we are to continue to have the freedoms that came of the inspiration of the Almighty to our Founding Fathers, we must return to the God who is their true Author.*

I am a churchman. I readily acknowledge, therefore, that my perspective is a reflection of my upbringing, my training, the virtues and principles in which I believe, and my personal observations as I near age ninety.

The twentieth century was just a decade old when I was born to loving, God-fearing parents. In 1910, a male born in the United States could expect to live to age fifty, and I am happy to say that I have bettered that expectation considerably.

In fact, I still feel young, with a love for life and its challenges and pleasures. My life has been rich because it has been filled with problems to solve and associations to savor. I have wrestled with dilemmas large and small. I have known something of discouragement and, on a few occasions, have felt the exhilaration of achievement. I feel a great sense of gratitude for the marvelous and generous blessings of the Almighty.

As a result of good health, long life, and various opportunities and obligations arising from responsibilities in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which I have the privilege of representing, I have tromped and traveled around this world for the better part of ninety years. I have visited more than 150 countries, many of them dozens of times. I have walked on China's Great Wall, toured Vietnam during its season of intense conflict and seen first-hand the spoils and ravages of war, listened to bullets zing by my

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hotel window during a coup in Seoul, mourned with the survivors of a deadly shipwreck in the South Pacific, searched for earthquake victims in Peru, and viewed hurricane devastation in Honduras and Nicaragua.

Such experiences have taken me across the seas south and west and east. The world's sights have been glorious to behold. I have wondered at the symmetry of Fujiyama in Japan and marveled at the transcendent beauty of the great mountains of Switzerland, France, and Italy. I have seen the Taj Mahal by moonlight in Agra, India; the orchards of Russia in the bloom of spring; and the rice lands of China at harvest time. I have admired the pampas of Argentina and the towering peaks of Bolivia, and walked in the great and beautiful cities of Europe. I have known the beauties of New Zealand, the expanse of Australia, the highlands of the Andes, the exotic fauna of the Amazon, and the peaks and plains of every nation in South America.

I love the peoples of the world! I love the sights and smells, the grand varieties of culture with their costumes, customs, and music; eyes dark and light, hair black and blonde, and the incredible range of creativity in everything from architecture to food. I believe this world to be the creation of Jehovah, and I delight at its diversity.

But as much as I love the peoples and places of the world, I return from each trip abroad with a peculiar love for my homeland. Many times, as I've flown over the Atlantic or Pacific en route home, the words of Henry Van Dyke have come into my mind:

'Tis fine to see the Old World, and travel up and down  
Among the famous palaces and cities of renown,  
To admire the crumbly castles and the statues of the kings,—  
But now I think I've had enough of antiquated things.  
So it's home again, and home again, America for me!  
My heart is turning home again, and there I long to be,  
In the land of youth and freedom beyond the ocean bars,  
Where the air is full of sunlight and the flag is full of stars.

I love America!

I love America for its great and brawny strength, the products of its vital factories, and the science of its laboratories. I love it for the great intellectual capacity of its people, for their generous hearts and helping hands. I love America's tremendous spiritual heritage and strengths. It is unique among the nations of the earth—in its discovery, in its birth as a nation, in the amalgamation of the races and cultures that have come to its shores, in the consistency and strength of its government.

I love America for the tremendous genius of its scientists, its researchers, its laboratories, its universities, and the tens of thousands of facilities devoted to the increase of human health and comfort, to the sustenance of life, to improved communication and transportation. Its great throbbing and thriving industries have blessed the entire world. The standard of living of its people has been the envy of the entire earth. Its farmlands have yielded an abundance undreamed of in most lands of the world. The entrepreneurial environment that has sustained its industry has been the envy of and model for all nations.

My wife and I first visited Jerusalem long ago, before the 1967 war. It was then a divided city. We retained the services of a guide who was an Arab, and, during our tour, we stood on an elevation where we could see the other side of Jerusalem. With tears in his eyes, this man pointed to the home from which he had been dispossessed. And then he said with deep emotion, "You belong to the greatest nation on the face of the earth. Yours is the only nation that has been victorious in war and never claimed any territory as a prize of conquest. Your people have given millions, even billions, to the poor of the earth and never asked for anything in return. Rather, even after coming off as conqueror, you have poured yet other billions to revive those who had been your enemies in bloody conflict."

I had never thought of this significant perspective before. In no instance during my lifetime—not in the First World War or the

Second, not in the Korean War or Vietnam or the Persian Gulf—did our nation seize and hold territory for itself as a prize of conquest. To the contrary: On a train from Fukuoka, on the south island of Japan, to Tokyo, I have passed mile upon mile of great, modern steel mills built largely with money from the United States following the devastation of Japan. Now the Japanese are our tremendous competitors in the markets of the world. Not only did we not seize territory at the end of World War II, but we provided the impetus that has led to their superiority in many business enterprises. Surely there is no story like this in all of recorded history!

On another occasion, I accompanied the U.S. Agricultural Attaché to the docks of Bombay, in India, and there counted fourteen freighters in the harbor, each waiting to unload its cargo of wheat. We stood there for an hour as ton after ton of wheat from the fields of America was lifted out of the hulls of those ships. That grain spelled life to millions of the hungry of that land. When we returned to the attaché's office, he gathered his tabulations from his files and sat down to enter them into a calculating machine. Later, he concluded that the delivery of American wheat to India that year amounted to all of the grain grown in the United States from Colorado westward. Ours is a generous country that has been quick to respond when others are in need.

I especially love America for its great spiritual strength. It is a land of churches and synagogues, of temples and tabernacles, of pulpits and altars. We have on our coinage and our currency a national motto. It simply says, "In God We Trust." I believe that this is the foundation on which this nation was established: an unequivocal trust in the power of the Almighty to guide and defend us.

The hand of the Almighty was manifest on this continent even before the United States of America came into being. I have walked aboard the re-creation of the *Mayflower*, that tiny craft in which a hundred men, women, and children crossed the Atlantic in search of freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. Before even disembarking from the *Mayflower*

and stepping ashore after their long and grueling voyage, our Pilgrim fathers drafted and signed the Compact that became the instrument of their governance, the first such document drafted on this continent. It began with these words: "In the name of God, amen." It went on to say that the signers "by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic . . . and by virtue hereto do enact . . . such just and equal laws . . . as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony." This was the first charter of civil liberty drawn in America, the first of a succession of instruments that became the foundation of the miracle that is America.

Consider George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and their associates who signed the Declaration of Independence or participated in the Constitutional Convention. It is my conviction that although we have had a few great leaders since then, there has not been before or since so large a group of talented, able, dedicated, and inherently good men as those whom we call the Founding Fathers of our nation. For as long as they lived and led, they acknowledged the hand of the Almighty in the affairs of this republic.

Envision the scene at the Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia in the muggy June of 1776. There was drafted a Declaration of Independence, which concluded, "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor." Those who signed that document gave their lives; some of them literally rotted away as prisoners of war. They gave their fortunes. But they kept their sacred honor.

The war for independence followed. That was a time of crisis in our history, not alone because all the power of Britain was against the Colonies but more so because jealousy, bickering, and recrimination among the colonists resulted in a lack of adequate support for the army. That army, at its peak, numbered only 35,000 men. As

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acknowledged by some of those who were there, the God of Heaven fought its battles.

When the war ended, the bickering continued. But our Founding Fathers were men whom the God of Heaven had raised up, men who saw with a greater vision and dreamed a better and more inspired dream, men more concerned with the good of the whole than with their own personal comfort, reputations, or image before the people. On May 14, 1787, fifty-five of them met in Philadelphia. The heat of that summer was oppressive, the worst in the memory of the city's residents. There were differences of opinion, sharp and deep and bitter. But somehow, under the inspiration of the Almighty, there was forged the Constitution of the United States. On September 17, 1787, thirty-nine of the fifty-five attendees signed the document. It began with this remarkable preamble:

We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common Defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Of it, the great William Gladstone said later: "As the British Constitution is the most subtle organism which has proceeded from . . . progressive history, so the American Constitution is, so far as I can see, the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man."

The Constitution and Bill of Rights form the keystone of our nation.

It is my conviction that they came not alone of the brain and purpose of humans, but of the inspiration of the Almighty—that God Himself directed the founding of this nation. The document wrought by the men of 1787 in the miracle of Philadelphia provided

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for orderly changes of government, and the wonder of it is that, through two centuries, order has been preserved and observed.

Today, we stand on the shoulders of those who preceded us, men and women of courage and conviction who, in the midst of adversity, put their trust in the Almighty and worked endlessly to make their dreams come true; men and women who had nothing to sustain them but hope and faith, but who nonetheless brought to pass the nation that now graces this land.

I am not one to believe that all was good in the long ago and that all is bad today. For many reasons, I proclaim that *this* is the greatest age the world has known. But there is trouble in the land.

Today, we face challenges the Founding Fathers could not have possibly imagined or conceived; our societal challenges would have horrified them. We have come through wars, both civil and international, with victory, and have found peace. Yet now we are a people of contention. Strident and accusatory voices are heard in argument across the nation. We rose from scratch to become the greatest industrial power in the history of the earth, but we have lost some of our competitive edge, and have seen other nations move ahead of us in various fields, in both research and production. We spend billions of our resources in litigation one against another. Our spiritual power is sapped by a floodtide of pornography, by a debilitating epidemic of the use of narcotics and drugs that destroy both body and mind, and by a declining moral standard that is alarming and devastating to relationships, families, and the integrity of our nation as a whole.

We are forgetting God, whose commandments we have neglected and in some cases forgotten, and which we seem reluctant—or too undisciplined—to obey. In too many ways, we have substituted human sophistry for the wisdom of the Almighty.

America is still strong, but destructive forces have been and are at work. There is a serious unsteadiness in our country's stance in terms of morality, ethics, principles, and behavior. We as a people and a nation have increasingly neglected and abandoned

time-honored virtues that have been proven through the centuries to keep human beings individually, and therefore collectively, strong.

These problems are only symptomatic of many other problems we have as a people. During recent years, polls and circumstances have suggested that an unprecedented majority of Americans believe that the private lives of public officials need not be considered as a factor in their eligibility for public office, and that private morality has no connection with public behavior and credibility. I am more deeply concerned about the growing moral deficit than I am about the monetary deficit.

For a good while, there has been going on in this nation a process that I have termed the secularization of America. The single most substantial factor in the degeneration of the values and morals of our society is that we as a nation are forsaking the Almighty, and I fear that He will begin to forsake us. We are shutting the door against the God whose sons and daughters we are.

I have heard Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of Great Britain, say on more than one occasion, "You use the name of Deity in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution of the United States, and yet you cannot use it in the schoolroom." Her words are a rebuke and an indictment of America. Reverence for the Almighty, gratitude for His beneficent blessings, pleadings for His guidance, and a willingness to acknowledge His omniscience and omnipotence are increasingly being dropped from our public discourse.

Oaths of office and sworn promises to tell the truth in other legal procedures have traditionally concluded with the phrase, "So help me God." Several years ago, the state of New Jersey passed a law banishing the mention of God from state courtroom oaths. Following this action by the New Jersey legislature, a county judge decided to ban Bibles for such oaths "because you-know-Who is mentioned inside." And in recent years, the Boy Scouts of America have been attacked because of the language in the Scout Oath:

“On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country.”

Contrast such attitudes with that of George Washington, expressed more than two hundred years ago in his First Inaugural Address:

It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being, who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States a government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes.

People who carry in their hearts a strong conviction concerning the living reality of the Almighty and their accountability to Him for what they do with their lives are far less likely to become enmeshed in problems that inevitably weaken society. The loss of this conviction, the almost total secularizing of our public attitudes, has been largely responsible for the terrible social illnesses now running rampant among us.

In short, we are turning our hearts away from the God of the universe. *Divine law* has become a meaningless phrase. What was once so commonly spoken of as sin is now referred to as nothing more than poor judgment. Blatant dishonesty is openly referred to and excused as “misleading others.” Virtue is too often neglected, if not scorned or ridiculed as old-fashioned, confining, unenlightened. What was once considered transgression has now been labeled merely *misbehavior*, which we have come to not only tolerate but, in too many cases, rationalize, accept, and even embrace.

In earlier days, children and families were regarded as gifts from God, and a great majority of parents both acknowledged and accepted their responsibility to nurture their children and bring them

up in understanding, light, and truth. Work was a virtue to be enthroned as the enhancement of human dignity.

Marriage was once generally regarded as a sacred sacrament, but, for the populace as a whole, it is becoming an increasingly secular ceremony. Now, the epidemic of divorce rages on as an alarming number of adults choose to set aside the binding contracts they have made rather than subject themselves to the effort, the struggle of righting wrongs and repairing relationships. While parents quarrel, children suffer. The very foundation of their lives—a secure and happy home—is pulled from under them. We are losing something that speaks of accountability, not only to one another but to God who is our Father and who will stand in judgment upon us.

We need to be acutely aware of and concerned about our children, speaking of them as a whole. I worry about the millions who come into the world with handicaps, seemingly impossible to overcome—children whose lives are blighted by neglect and abuse, children who have limitless capacity but almost no opportunity. In the long term, this may well be the most serious problem facing our nation because its consequences multiply and reach forward through generations.

Lack of self-discipline and of a sense of responsibility is one of the fruits of the increasing secularization of our society. I was appalled to read not long ago that, in one community, a proposal was made that young women be paid a dollar a day for not becoming pregnant. How pathetic! Where is our sense of values?

Between 1972 and 1990, there were twenty-seven million abortion procedures performed in the United States. Think of it. What is happening to our concept of the sanctity of life?

The terrible blight of gangs affects our cities and our youth. These young men and women—many of whom are enticed into gangs in an attempt to imitate the feelings of belonging that should be supplied in the home—scheme, roam, destroy property,

and fight. They murder one another as well as innocent victims who happen to get in their way. They are an ill-begotten lot of young people who drift in a mire of terror and whose lives—if they survive—lead only to incarceration.

We try to gamble our way into prosperity, and, in the process, we further impoverish ourselves. In 1994 alone, Americans spent 482 billion dollars on gambling—more than they spent that year on movies, sports, music, cruise ships, and theme parks combined. Not long ago, lotteries were forbidden by law. Now, in many of our states, they are commonly viewed as a painless and politically expedient way to tax people without really taxing them, and to help balance budgets that are often out of line because of the unrestrained, undisciplined spending of public officials who have squandered their constituents' resources.

Too many of our youth, at alarmingly young ages, have access to and use drugs. And we see account after horrifying account of school massacres—children killing children, parents, and teachers.

We have in this nation more than a million people in prison, and we cannot build facilities fast enough to accommodate the accelerating need.

Can there be any doubt that a great sickness has invaded our land, and that healing is desperately needed in our hearts and in our homes? Our value system is deteriorating and crumbling before our eyes. Secular self-sufficiency has replaced worship in the lives of many.

That is the bad news. As we enumerate all our ills, the situation may appear hopeless. But there is great reason to have hope, for there is a remedy. Our sickness is not difficult to diagnose, nor is the remedy complicated to prescribe. Healing in our hearts and in our homes, and subsequently throughout society, will begin to occur when we individually and collectively return to the code of ethics and the canons of divine truth that our honored forefathers lived by.

We can treat and even cure the sickness that afflicts us by reenthroning the moral and spiritual elements that have disappeared in

recent decades. The time has come to look back on the virtues and values that made America great, not only in terms of its unmatched prosperity and affluence, or its military might, but in the breadth and depth of its moral leadership. To do so, we must instill fundamental virtues and values in the lives of the men and women, boys and girls of this land.

It was said of old, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). And the Psalmist wrote, "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:11-12).

We would do well to emphasize the kinds of virtues celebrated by the apostle Paul: "Whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be *any virtue*, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:8-9; emphasis added).

Values such as these, which form the roots of civility, flourish in homes where fathers and mothers, husbands and wives and children live together with love and appreciation and respect for one another. This is the way it was at Plymouth. This is the way it can and must be again, to keep America strong and robust, and to make its people happy as they look to the future. We as a people are at a time when we must openly embrace and celebrate the virtues for which we stand.

Even with the litany of problems that face us, there is still much strength in America. I am an optimist! I love this nation for its inherent greatness. I believe there is tremendous residual goodness in its people. For the most part, they appreciate that which is good and beautiful and uplifting. They acknowledge and appreciate values that lead to peace, goodwill, and behavior based on personal

integrity. There has been a resurgent interest in things of a spiritual nature—another evidence of the inherently good instincts and longings of many people.

Men and women of all denominations have helped settle this land—Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Greeks, Muslims and Hindus. With few exceptions, those who helped establish this great country believed in and worshiped God, although their interpretations of Him may have varied.

They built for us a tremendous inheritance because they were men and women of faith and conviction. They had no government largesse to fall back on, but they looked to God in every extremity and thanked Him for every blessing.

Our great concern, our great interest, must be to preserve for the generations to come those wondrous elements of our society and manner of living that will bequeath to them the strengths and the goodness of which we have been the beneficiaries. To do so, we must retard and then halt the decay we observe about us, which comes of forsaking the God whom our forefathers knew, loved, worshiped, and looked to for strength.

Since the founding of this Republic, the roots of our nation have drawn nurture from the waters of faith in God. As we enter the twenty-first century, it is imperative that we renew our spiritual anchors. “God Bless America,” we sing with reverence, pleading, and conviction. Future blessings will come only as we deserve them. Can we expect peace and prosperity, harmony and goodwill, when we turn our backs on the Source of our strength?

If we are to continue to have the freedoms that evolved within the structure that was the inspiration of the Almighty to our Founding Fathers, we must return to the God who is their true Author. We need to worship Him in spirit and in truth. We need to acknowledge His all-powerful hand. We need to humble ourselves before Him and seek His guidance. If we would individually and collectively resolve to stand for something, to lift our voices for

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truth and goodness and offer our supplications to our Eternal Father, those supplications would be heard, and the result would be remarkable.

Does this compromise the separation of church and state? Of course not. Such a provision does not preclude a constant petition to the Almighty for wisdom and guidance as we walk through perilous times.

Is it too much to expect that prayer, public and private, might once again be established in our national and private lives? Then, with a general acknowledgment of the God in whom we put our trust, we may expect a diminution in our social problems, an increase in public and private morality, and a renewed sense of freedom and liberty. I would hope that all of us, within our hearts, would then resolve to live nearer to God and the commandments He has given us as a guide in our lives; to walk with gratitude before Him for His generous mercies; to incorporate virtue in its many forms into our lives; to recognize that someday we all must give an accounting of our lives to Him; to strengthen and defend the home; and to seek His strength, His wisdom, His inspiration, and His love as we serve in the great society of which each of us is a part.

There is something reassuring about standing for something, and knowing what we stand for. For men or women who are true to themselves and to the virtues and standards they have personally adopted, it is not difficult to be true to others. Those who are committed to, and have patterned their lives after, a Higher Power need not rely on public opinion, which is often blatantly skewed.

Here is the answer to the conflicts that beset us. Here is the answer to the evils of pornography, abortion, drugs, and the squandering of our resources on evil pursuits. Here is the answer to the great epidemic of litigation that consumes time, saps our financial strength, and shackles our entrepreneurial spirit. Here is the answer to tawdry politics that place selfish interests and pursuits above the common good.

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Let all houses of worship ring with righteousness. Let people everywhere bow in reverence before the Almighty who is our one true source of strength. Let us look inward and adjust our priorities and standards, recommitting ourselves to time-honored virtues that embrace right and shun wrong. Let us look outward in the spirit of the Golden Rule. Let us work tirelessly to defend and strengthen the family, which is the fundamental unit of society.

Notwithstanding the trouble, notwithstanding the argument, notwithstanding the increasingly heavy hand of government, notwithstanding the spirit of arrogance we so often display, notwithstanding the growing tide of pornography and permissiveness, notwithstanding corruption in public office and betrayal of sacred trust—I marvel at the miracle of America, the land which the God of Heaven long ago declared to be a choice land above all other lands, and at the people He has designated to inhabit this nation.

This is a good land, a great land with a glorious past and a bright future—if we treat and cure the sickness spreading throughout our society.

God bless America, for it is His creation.

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AN INVITATION TO STAND  
UP AND BE COUNTED . . .

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**N**o nation can be greater than the strength of its individual homes or the virtue of its people. Sadly, many today would say ours is a nation in crisis. Families are splintering around us, our children are becoming alienated from their great cultural heritage, and our leaders seem increasingly out of touch. Yet, according to Gordon B. Hinckley, president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one cannot lose hope. The solution lies not within our governments, schools, or symbols of popular culture, but rather within ourselves, our families, and our faith.

In the tradition of William Bennett's *Book of Virtues*, Hinckley has created a classic look at the values that can change our world—and how to stand up for them. Drawing on anecdotes from his own life, as well as from our nation today, he examines ten virtues that have proven through the ages to provide the most profound path to a better world: love, honesty, morality, civility, learning, forgiveness and mercy, thrift and industry, gratitude, optimism, and faith. He then shows how the two guardians of virtue—marriage and the family—can keep us on that path, even in difficult times.

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*Standing for Something* is an inspiring blueprint for what we can all do—as individuals, as a nation, and as a world community—to rediscover the values and virtues that have historically made us strong. At once masterful and illuminating, it is a work for our time: a reflection from one man's long and productive life that dwells not on the past but on the means by which all of us can work toward a brighter future.