

YOUNG WOMEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Bertha S. Reeder, President
 Emily H. Bennett, First Counselor
 LaRue C. Longden, Second Counselor
 with all members of the Board as at present constituted.

PRIMARY ASSOCIATION

LaVern W. Parmley, President
 Arta M. Hale, First Counselor
 Leone W. Doxey, Second Counselor
 with all members of the Board as at present constituted.

President Clark:

So far as I could observe, all votes were in the affirmative.

President David O. McKay:

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. of the First Presidency has just presented the

General Authorities of the Church, and the General Officers for the sustaining vote of the congregation, representing the entire Church. You have heard his announcement that all voting is in the affirmative.

We shall now hear from our beloved associate, Elder Ezra Taft Benson.

ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

MY BELOVED brethren and sisters and friends: I deem this a signal honor, a truly great privilege, but a sobering responsibility. I pray for the inspiration of heaven and for an interest in your faith and prayers. My heart is full to overflowing with gratitude for the blessings which we enjoy and which are mine. I thank God that in his infinite wisdom he has seen fit to call these great conferences of the Church. No one, I am sure, has benefited more richly from these conferences than I have. I have literally received a spiritual uplift, for which I am most grateful to my heavenly Father.

In addition to attending the conference, I have had the glorious privilege of spending an hour or so in meditation in the temple of God to the east of us. I humbly acknowledge the sustaining power of my heavenly Father throughout my entire life, for which I am most grateful, and particularly for his sustaining power during the last twenty months.

I am grateful for the faith, the love, and the confidence of my associates in the General Authorities; for the support of my wife and family; for the prayers and the support of the Saints of Zion,

as well as the millions of good people outside the Church. I know I shall never be able to express adequately the gratitude I feel for those who have so loyally and so helpfully sustained and supported me with their love, confidence, and prayers.

I am very grateful I have received a witness from the Almighty that at the present time, at least, I am serving where he wishes me to serve. I have never had any doubts of that fact since that early morning hour when I met our great leader, my beloved associate, President David O. McKay, on the parking lot of the Church Office Building, and he made the statement to me, "My mind is clear. I know what the Lord wants you to do."

So, my brethren and sisters, I am happy in the assignment which is mine. My one fear, and my one anxiety is that I may inadvertently sometime do something or say something that will cast an unfavorable light or bring discredit upon the Church and kingdom of God and the people whom I love so dearly, and upon this great nation which we all love. I pray that this may never happen.

I love this nation of which we are a

part. To me it is not just another nation, not just a member of a family of nations. It is a great and glorious nation with a divine mission and it has been brought into being under the inspiration of heaven. It is truly a land choice above all others. I thank God for the knowledge which we have regarding the prophetic history and the prophetic future of this great land of America.

When I contemplate the great events that have transpired here, going way back to the days when our first parents were placed in the Garden of Eden, and recall that this garden was here in America, that it was here also where Adam met with a body of great high priests at Adam-ondi-Ahman shortly before his death and gave them his final blessing, and that to that same spot he is to return again to meet with the leaders of his people, his children—when I contemplate, my brethren and sisters, that here in this land will be established the New Jerusalem, that here in this land will Zion be built—when I contemplate that prophets of God anciently served here in this land, and that the resurrected Christ appeared unto them—and when I contemplate that the greatest of all visions, the coming of God the Father, and the Son to the boy Prophet in our day took place in this land, my heart fills with gratitude that I am privileged to live here, and that I have the honor and pleasure of not only serving in the Church, but also of serving in the government of this great land. I consider it an honor and privilege.

I am grateful for the Founding Fathers of this land and for the freedom they have vouchsafed to us. I am grateful that they recognized, as great leaders of this nation have always recognized, that the freedom which we enjoy did not originate with the Founding Fathers; that this glorious principle, this great boon of freedom and respect for the dignity of man, came as a gift from the Creator. The Founding Fathers, it is true, with superb genius welded together the safeguards of these freedoms. It was necessary, however, for them to turn to the scriptures, to religion, in order to have this great

experiment make sense to them. And so our freedom is God-given. It antedates the Founding Fathers.

I am grateful, too, my brethren and sisters, that they saw fit to state, among other things, that “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights”—rights which cannot be conferred by any man or nation, rights which only the God of heaven can bestow—“that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” As Brother Thomas E. McKay said, “not happiness, but the opportunity to pursue and earn happiness.”

When the God of heaven said to one of his ancient prophets, “. . . men are, that they might have joy,” (2 Ne. 2:25) he also implied that men should have free agency. They might have joy if through their efforts and the wise exercise of their free agency they lived to merit that joy.

You will recall that through Moses the Lord said that Satan was cast out of the great council in heaven because he “. . . sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him.” (Moses 4:3.) There is the source of free agency—“. . . which I, the Lord God, had given him.”

I have rejoiced, my brethren and sisters, that in recent years our great leader has raised his voice from one end of this land to the other, and in foreign countries, pointing out the great blessings of freedom and free agency, and explaining so clearly the source of these priceless blessings.

I am grateful for the Constitution of this land. I am grateful that the Founding Fathers made it clear that our allegiance runs to that Constitution and the glorious eternal principles embodied therein. Our allegiance does not run to any man, to a king, or a dictator, or a president, although we revere and honor those whom we elect to high office. Our allegiance runs to the Constitution and to the principles embodied therein. The Founding Fathers made that clear and provided well for checks and balances and safeguards in an attempt to guarantee this

Sunday, October 3

Third Day

freedom to those of us who live in this land.

I am grateful that the God of heaven saw fit to put his stamp of approval upon the Constitution and to indicate that it had come into being through wise men whom he raised up unto this very purpose. He asked the Saints, even in the dark days of their persecution and hardship to continue to seek for redress from their enemies "According," he said, "to the laws and constitution . . . which I have suffered to be established and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh." (D. & C. 101:77.) And then he made this most impressive declaration:

And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood. (*Ibid.*, 101:80.)

It is gratifying that the Constitutions in many of the other lands of our neighbors in the Americas are patterned very much after this divinely-appointed Constitution, which the God of heaven directed in the founding of this nation. It isn't any wonder, therefore, that Joseph Smith, the Prophet—a truly great American—referring to the Constitution, said,

[It] is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God. It is a heavenly banner. . . . (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 147.)

Yes, my brethren and sisters, we have a rich heritage, but may I remind you that nations oftentimes sow the seeds of their own destruction even while enjoying prosperity, even before reaching the zenith or the peak of their power. I think history clearly indicates that this is often the case. When it appears that all is well, oftentimes the very seeds of destruction are sown, sometimes unwittingly. Most of the great civilizations of the world have not been conquered from without until they have destroyed themselves from within by sowing these seeds of destruction.

People who are willing—and we have some of them in this country—to trade freedom for security, are sowing the seeds of destruction and deserve neither freedom nor security. Yes, we have,

and have had for a good many years, in evidence in this country—this land choice above all other lands—certain trends that strike, in my judgment, at the very foundation of much that we hold dear. There is not time to discuss these trends today, but I would like to emphasize that as nations tend to enjoy higher and higher standards of living, greater and greater comforts, greater and greater material blessings, there seems to be a tendency for them to become more and more interested in preserving their luxuries and their comforts than in preserving and safeguarding the ideals and principles that have made them great. In other words, there is a tendency for them to become infected with the germs of decadent morality.

As we look to the future and contemplate our responsibilities as American citizens, what is the duty of Latter-day Saints? What is the duty of the elders of Israel in safeguarding this freedom which has been purchased so dearly with the blood of millions of our brothers and sisters who have gone before?

Here again the God of heaven has given us guidance, as always, both in the revelations and in the word that has come from his living Oracles. He has told us some of the things we must do in order to preserve this freedom and safeguard the blessings we have today. May I refer to one of these revelations, a revelation given at a time when the Lord was counseling the Saints to accept patiently their persecutions and their hardships with the full assurance that all these things would eventually be for their good and benefit.

And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them.

And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me. (D. & C. 98:4-5.)

It is very clear, my brethren and sisters, that the Lord disapproves of force, coercion, and intimidation. It is also very clear from the history of the world that only free people are truly happy. The revelation continues:

Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending the law which is the constitutional law of the land;

And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil.

I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free.

Then he points out this danger:

Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn. (*Ibid.*, 98:6-9.)

Those of us who had the opportunity of traveling in war-torn Europe at the end of the last war saw ample evidence of what befalls people when the wicked are permitted to rise to positions of leadership. “. . . when the wicked rule the people mourn.” Saith the Lord,

Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil. (*Ibid.*, 98:10.)

Now that is a commandment to his Church and to his Saints. To me it means that we have a responsibility as Latter-day Saints to use our influence so honest men and wise men and good men will be elected to public office in the community, in the county, in the state, and in the nation. To me this commandment of God is just as binding upon the Latter-day Saints as is the law of tithing, or the Word of Wisdom, or any other commandment which the God of heaven has given us.

As I read that for the first time some years ago I thought, “What an indictment of corrupt would-be political leaders in many parts of the world—demagogues who deal in half-truths, innuendos, and falsehoods! Here the God of heaven has pointed out the type of men he wants elected to public office among his people.” It is not enough, my brethren and sisters, just to stand on the sidelines and criticize what is taking place, and to point the finger of scorn at some political leader. It is our job, our duty, and our responsibility to take an active interest in these matters, and carry out the admonition and the commandment which God has given

us to see to it that men of character—good men, as measured by the standards of the gospel—are elected to public office.

So, today, I would like to throw out a challenge to the elders of Israel, my brethren of the priesthood, that we put forth an effort to prepare ourselves for statesmanlike work. The Prophet Joseph, as you will recall, had something to say regarding the important part which the elders of Israel would play in the safeguarding, if not the saving, of the Constitution of this land.

I recall the words of the Savior in which he said,

. . . for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. (Luke 16:8.)

I hope and pray that we will be wise as the children of light, as the children to whom God has revealed these glorious truths. It is my conviction that only in this land, under this God-inspired Constitution, under an environment of freedom, could it have been possible to have established the Church and kingdom of God and restored the gospel in its fulness. It is our responsibility, my brethren and sisters, to see that this freedom is maintained, so that the Church can flourish in the future.

Today I would like to propose four questions which every Latter-day Saint might well ask as he attempts to appraise any program, policy, or idea promoted by any would-be political leader. I mention these because I think they will provide a safeguard in electing to office men who will meet the requirements which the Lord has set forth in the revelations.

First, is the proposal, the policy, or the idea being promoted right as measured by the gospel of Jesus Christ? I assure you it is much easier for one to measure a proposed policy by the gospel of Jesus Christ if he has accepted the gospel and is living it.

Secondly, is it right as measured by the Constitution of this land and the glorious principles embodied in that Constitution? Now that suggests that that we must read and study the Constitution, the Declaration of Inde-

Sunday, October 3

Third Day

pendence, and the Bill of Rights, that we might know what principles are embodied therein.

Thirdly, we might well ask the question: Is it right as measured by the counsel of the living oracles of God? It is my conviction, my brethren and sisters, that these living oracles are not only authorized, but are obligated to give counsel to this people on any subject which is vital to the welfare of this people and the upbuilding of the kingdom of God. So, that measure should be applied. Is it right as measured by the counsel of the living oracles of God?

Fourthly, what will be the effect on the morale and the character of the people if this or that policy is adopted? After all, as a Church we are interested in building men and women, building character, because character is the one thing we make in this world and take with us into the next. It must never be sacrificed for expediency.

So, my brethren, the Lord's priesthood has a mission to perform for liberty-loving people everywhere. We cannot, any more than Jonah of old, run away from our calling. If the people shall accept the Lord's solution of the world's problems, even as those who listened to a repentant Jonah, then all shall be well with them. If they do not, however, they will suffer the consequences. Our responsibility, as in Jonah's case, is to see to it that the people have a chance to choose decisively after they have been shown clearly the Lord's way and what the Lord expects of them.

We must provide effective and courageous, God-inspired leadership so that the people among whom we labor may choose wisely between the issues. The choice is theirs, but providing them the opportunity to choose the right with a knowledge of the revelations of God and the counsel of the living Oracles, that is our responsibility as leaders in the priesthood.

The Prophet Joseph said in substance at one time: It is our duty to consecrate all our influence to make popular that which is sound and good, and unpopular that which is unsound.

It is right politically for a man who

has influence—of course, influence for good—to use it.

I thought last night, my brethren, where could there be a greater influence for good in this world than in a magnified priesthood? Nineteen thousand members of the priesthood assembled last night. One quarter million hold the Melchizedek Priesthood! What a power and influence for good could be wielded in this blessed land if we would heed the admonition which the Lord has given and see to it that men who are wise and good and honest would have our vigorous support and receive our interest in their selection and election to high office in the community, county, state, and federal government.

Let us, my brethren, seek to take an active part in our local, state, and national affairs. We are commanded by the Lord to do so. It is as binding on us as any of the Lord's commandments. Actually, it is when good men do nothing that evil flourishes.

The priesthood of the Church and kingdom of God who magnify their callings are good men. Of course there will be opposition. There will be conflicts. There will be misrepresentation. We must stand firm, however, for that which we believe to be right as measured by these standards, for those things which we know to be good and true, and the God of heaven will sustain us.

We have approaching us a great election in this country. My plea with you today, my brethren and sisters, is that regardless of the political party with which you are affiliated, you will remember the standards which the God of heaven has given us, and that you and all of us will use our influence as a means of helping to safeguard the liberty of this country, and those noble concepts established under the inspiration of heaven. We must see to it that honest men, good men, wise men, are elected to public office in this land, choice above all others, men who will use their influence to protect and strengthen those basic concepts that have made this nation great.

In closing I quote these words from J. E. Hamilton:

How much now we need a leadership that will tell the truth and talk straight,

not about what is expedient, . . . but about what is everlastingly right, and call our people to a crusade for it, and pledge America to the defense of it, so that all nations will be convinced that we mean it! We need men who will ignore the consequences, tell the truth, and take a long chance with God.

It is my prayer that the great promises which have been made by the prophets of God regarding this land will be realized because a righteous people will merit their fulfilment. May we do our duty as citizens and as members of the Church to see to it that the right kind of people are elected to public office, so that rich blessings which we now enjoy and which have been promised to us, may be realized in all the days to come.

I testify to you, my brethren and sisters, that this is a choice land, that God held this hemisphere, as it were, in the palm of his hand for hundreds, yea, thousands of years in order that the great mission of this land might be undertaken and might be accomplished. The kingdom of God is again upon the earth. I testify to you that God has spoken again from the heavens in this land, in our day; that God the Father, and the Son did appear to the Prophet Joseph; that they revealed themselves unto him, and that through that greatest of all visions, a new gospel dispen-

sation was opened up in preparation for the second coming of the Master.

With all the power that I possess I invite men everywhere to investigate the truths of the claims of this people, that they too may join with us in building up the kingdom in preparation for that glorious day when the Redeemer will come again to dwell upon the earth as King of kings, and Lord of lords. I pray that this day may be hastened, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us. The congregation will now sing, "Now Let Us Rejoice in the Day of Salvation," conducted by J. Spencer Cornwall.

After the singing we shall hear Elder Bruce R. McConkie.

The Choir and congregation sang the hymn, "Now Let Us Rejoice In the Day of Salvation."

President David O. McKay:

Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the First Council of Seventy will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Harold B. Lec.

ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

Of the First Council of the Seventy

CERTAIN basic truths must be accepted by all men now living if they would gain for themselves the fulness of that reward which is prepared in the mansions of the Father. These great truths are known only by revelation. They are revealed in the gospel, and are most devoutly believed by faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Many of them have been taught with power and conviction (in the sessions of this conference) by the living Oracles who stand at the head of this kingdom. They have been taught in plainness, and with that authorization and power which comes from the Holy Ghost and from no other source. May

I be so bold as to recapitulate, as we near the close of the conference, a few of these great fundamental truths.

We believe that there is a God in heaven who is infinite and eternal, an almighty, all-powerful being—a personage of tabernacle, a being in the express image of whose body we mortal men have been created.

We believe that he has all power and all wisdom; that he knows all things; that in his infinite grace, love, and condescension for us, he has ordained the plan of creation, of redemption, of salvation, and of possible progression to an eternal exaltation on high.

We believe that he is our Father in heaven, literally; that we are his spirit