

Choir, and Alexander Schreiner is at the organ.

Following the singing we shall hear from Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve.

Following a brief organ interlude, the Tabernacle Choir sang "The Hosanna

Anthem." The Congregation joined in singing the chorus, "The Spirit Of God Like A Fire Is Burning."

President David O. McKay:

We shall now hear from Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve.

ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brothers and sisters, everywhere:

With joy and gratitude I face you today in, and from, this historic Tabernacle. I am grateful to be here: for this fellowship, for freedom to meet in peace, to speak without fear, to attend this inspirational conference.

I thank God for freedom—the right of choice. I am grateful for this great nation in which we meet. Every true Latter-day Saint throughout the world loves the USA. The Constitution of this land is part of every Latter-day Saint's religious faith.

To us, this is not just another nation, not just a member of the family of nations. This is a great and glorious nation with a divine mission and a prophetic history and future. It has been brought into being under the inspiration of heaven.

It is our firm belief, as Latter-day Saints, that the Constitution of this land was established by men whom the God of heaven raised up unto that very purpose. It is our conviction also that the God of heaven guided the founding fathers in establishing it for his particular purpose.

The founders of this republic were deeply spiritual men. They believed men are capable of self-government and that it is the job of government to protect freedom and foster private initiative.

Our earliest American fathers came here with a common objective—freedom of worship and liberty of conscience. Familiar with the sacred scriptures, they believed that liberty is a gift of heaven. To them, man as a child of God, emphasized the sacredness of the individual and the interest of a kind Providence in the affairs of men and nations. These leaders recognized the

need for divine guidance and the importance of vital religion and morality in the affairs of men and nations.

To the peoples who should inhabit this blessed land of the Americas, the Western Hemisphere, an ancient prophet uttered this significant promise and solemn warning: "Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, . . ."

"For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. . . ." (See Ether 2:12, 10.)

Ancient American prophets six hundred years before Christ foresaw the coming of Columbus and those who followed. These prophets saw the establishment of the colonies, the war for independence, and predicted the outcome. These prophecies are contained in a volume of scripture called the Book of Mormon. This sacred record, a companion volume to the Holy Bible, which it confirms, is an added witness to the divine mission of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Redeemer of the world.

How I wish every American and every living soul would read the Book of Mormon. I testify to you that it is true. It tells about the prophetic history and mission of America. It gives the comforting assurance that God has kept this great nation, as it were, in the hollow of his hand in preparation for its great mission.

Yes, the Lord planned it all. Why? So America could serve as a beacon of

liberty and in preparation for the opening of a new gospel dispensation—the last and greatest of all dispensations in preparation for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. To achieve his purposes the Lord had to have a base of operations. Later he revealed to a modern prophet that the Constitution of this land was established by “wise men” whom the Lord “raised up unto this very purpose.” (See D&C 101:80.) The Lord also directed that the constitutional laws of the land, supporting the principle of freedom, should be upheld and that honest and wise men should be sought for and upheld in public office.

The establishment of this great Christian nation, with a spiritual foundation, was all in preparation for the restoration of the gospel, following the long night of apostasy. Then in 1820 the time had arrived. God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ made their glorious appearance. I give you a few words from the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was the instrument in God’s hands in restoring the gospel and establishing the true Church of Christ again upon the earth. In response to humble prayer Joseph relates: “. . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (JS 2:16-17.)

To me this is the greatest event that has occurred in this world since the resurrection of the Master—and it happened in America.

Later, other heavenly messengers came to restore the authority of the Holy Priesthood and important keys essential to the opening of the final gospel dispensation. The Church was organized in 1830. Immediately, in response to divine command, missionary-messengers began to carry the important message of salvation throughout the world. It is a world message intended for all of God’s children. And so, once this nation was well established, then the Church was restored and from here the message of

the restored gospel has gone forth. All according to divine plan.

This then becomes the Lord’s base of operations in these latter days. And this base will not be shifted out of its place—the land of America. This nation will, in a measure at least, fulfil its mission even though it may face serious and troublesome days. The degree to which it achieves its full mission depends upon the righteousness of its people. God has, through his power, established a free people in this land as a means of helping to carry forward his purposes.

“It was his latter-day purpose to bring forth his gospel in America, not in any other place. It was in America where the Book of Mormon plates were deposited. That was no accident. It was his design. It was in this same America where they were brought to light by angelic ministry. It was” . . . [here] “where he organized his modern Church, where he, himself made a modern personal appearance.” (Editorial, *Church News*.)

Yes, it was here under a free government and a strong nation that protection was provided for his restored Church. Now God will not permit his base of operations—America—to be destroyed. He has promised protection to this land if we will but serve the God of the land. He has also promised protection to the righteous even, if necessary, to send fire from heaven to destroy their enemies. (Ether 2:12, 1 Nephi 22:17.)

No, God’s base of operations will not be destroyed. But it may be weakened and made less effective. One of the first rules of war strategy—and we are at war with the adversary and his agents—is to protect the base of operations. This we must do if we are to build up the kingdom throughout the world and safeguard our God-given freedom.

How will we protect this base of operations?

We must protect this base of operations from every threat—from sin, from unrighteousness, immorality, from desecration of the Sabbath day, from lawlessness, from parental and juvenile delinquency.

We must protect it from dirty movies, filthy advertising, from salacious and

suggestive TV programs, magazines, and books.

We must protect this base from idleness, subsidies, doles, and soft governmental paternalism which weakens initiative, discourages industry, destroys character, and demoralizes people.

We must protect this base from complacency—from the dangerous feeling that all is well—from being lulled away into a false security. We must protect this American base from the brainwashing, increasingly administered to our youth in many educational institutions across the land, by some misinformed instructors and some wolves in sheep's clothing. Their false indoctrination, often perpetrated behind the front of so-called academic freedom, is leaving behind many faithless students, socialist-oriented, who are easy subjects for state tyranny.

"At what point, then, is the approach of danger to be expected?" asked Abraham Lincoln, and answered, ". . . If it ever reaches us, it must spring up among us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time or die by suicide." (Springfield, Ill., Jan. 27, 1837.)

The only threat to the liberty and independence of the American people from abroad is the threat of world communism spreading from its base in the Soviet Union. But the best authorities are confident that the Soviets will not provoke a major war. Their economy would not support it.

Lenin said, "The soundest strategy in war is to postpone operations until the moral disintegration of the enemy renders the mortal blow possible and easy." Commenting on Lenin's statement the Indianapolis *Star* adds: "Where then does the real danger lie? It lies with us—the American people. . . ."

"Other great civilizations have died by suicide. The first free people, the Greeks, died thus.

"And why did Greece fall: 'A slackness and softness finally came over them to their ruin. In the end more than they wanted freedom they wanted security, a comfortable life, and they lost all—security, comfort and freedom.'

"It is the same with Americans today. The danger that threatens us is an internal danger. It lies in our hearts and minds and not in the hands of Khrushchev.

"It is our own ignorance—ignorance of our own history and our heritage of liberty that threatens us. It is our ignorance of the true nature of our enemy, socialistic communism, that threatens us. . . . Our own lack of faith in freedom and ourselves, our own lack of confidence in the greatness of America and all that she stands for, morally and materially, is what puts us in mortal danger.

"Too many of us are afraid—afraid of atomic war, afraid of the disapproval of our allies or the neutrals, afraid of the threats and boasts of the bloated tyrants in the Kremlin, afraid to offend others by taking action to defend ourselves."

Yes, we are afraid to live righteously according to eternal principles—economic, moral, and spiritual. This is our danger. We must never forget that nations may—and usually do—sow the seeds of their own destruction while enjoying unprecedented prosperity. As Jenkin Lloyd Jones said, "It is time we hit the sawdust trail. It is time we revived the idea that there is such a thing as sin—just plain old willful sin. It is time we brought self-discipline back into style. . . ."

"I am fed up with the educationists and pseudo-scientists who have underrated our potential as a people. . . . I am tired of seeing America debased and low-rated in the eyes of foreigners. I am genuinely disturbed that to idealistic youth in many countries the fraud of Communism appears synonymous with morality, while we, the chief repository of real freedom, are regarded as being in the last stages of decay.

"In this hour of fear, confusion and self-doubt . . . let there be a fresh breeze, a breeze of new honesty, new idealism, new integrity."

To protect this base we must protect the soul of America—we must return to a love and respect for the basic spiritual concepts upon which this nation has been established. We must study the

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Constitution and the writings of the founding fathers.

Yes, we must protect the Lord's base of operations by moving away from unsound economic policies which encourage creeping socialism and its companion, insidious, atheistic communism. If we are to protect this important base, we must as a nation live within our means, balance our budgets, and pay our debts. We must establish sound monetary policies and take needed steps to compete in world markets.

If we are to protect this American base, we must realize that all things, including information disseminated by our schools, churches, and government, should be judged according to the words of the prophets, especially the living prophet. This procedure coupled with the understanding which will come through the Spirit of the Lord, if we are living in compliance with the scriptures, is the only sure foundation and basis of judgment. Any other course of action leaves us muddled, despondent, wandering in shades of gray, easy targets for Satan.

We must not fail in these pressing and important matters. We must not fall short of the great mission the Lord

has proffered and outlined for America and for his divinely restored Church.

Yes, this is a choice land—a nation with a prophetic history.

God bless America and her leaders, and all the free world. And may God protect his latter-day base of operation that his glorious message of salvation may go forth to all the world, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Ezra Taft Benson, a member of the Council of the Twelve, has just spoken. The Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "Lord Now Victorious."

The Tabernacle Choir sang the anthem, "Lord Now Victorious."

President David O. McKay:

You have listened to Elder Ezra Taft Benson, one of the members of the Twelve. President Hugh B. Brown, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now be our concluding speaker.

PRESIDENT HUGH B. BROWN

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

I pray for divine guidance as I humbly undertake to speak to this vast audience. May the Holy Spirit dictate what is said, and then it will be the truth, and may that same Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth, accompany the spoken word to our edification and blessing.

A brief explanation of our interpretation and acceptance of the most fundamental of all Christian doctrines may assist both friends and members to answer the recurring question: Are the Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, Christians?

We might with profit, and we hope with some interest, consider the question: What does it mean to be a Christian? The dictionary defines a Christian as one who follows the precepts and example of Jesus Christ, or one whose

life is conformed to the doctrines of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now we cannot, of course, this morning discuss, nor could we hardly enumerate the various saving principles of the gospel of Christ, but there is one doctrinal event which foreshadows and overshadows all other Christian doctrine. I refer to the atonement of Christ, and it would seem that this would be appropriate, as we approach the Easter time. "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel." (Third Article of Faith.)

Faith in this one transcendent event, the most important in all history, is the enduring foundation upon which the true Christian gospel is built. Upon it,