

If there were time to testify what we have heard these young voices repeat and reflect in their spirit and their witness, it would be a very impressive manifestation that there is a place to hear the right voice.

We met in England with a professional journalist who had lived in many parts of the land. He seemed unresponsive emotionally, as he watched, and I thought maybe he wasn't responding to these choice young people. And then he sought me out to say, "Mr. Hanks, it has been nice to hear you and the others, but the thing I really enjoyed after being in the Brighton riots and living in Asia and South America and elsewhere is to watch these young people.

They are different from any other group I ever saw."

The Church offers to its youth answers to some of their serious, sacred, spiritual questions. It offers them a guide of conduct that will help them to live with meaningfulness and joy in this world, and it offers them this sacred personal commitment we call testimony that allows them to say "I know God lives."

I echo that testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President N. Eldon Tanner:**

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

## ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My brothers and sisters, seen and unseen, humbly and gratefully I approach this sacred responsibility.

First may I endorse with all my heart the masterful keynote discourse of our beloved prophet, President David O. McKay, delivered Friday, entitled "Man's Free Agency—an Eternal Principle of Progress." As he closed his prophetic warning, he said, "Pernicious efforts and sinister schemes are cunningly and stealthily being fostered to deprive man of his individual freedom."

Once again the prophet has warned us about our loss of freedom and has left us without excuse. God grant we may be wise enough to heed his counsel. Let us become alerted and informed regarding the insidious influence abroad in this and other lands which would rob us of all we hold dear.

It is good to be home—to stay, insofar as a member of the Twelve can determine—after nearly two years abroad.

I bring you the love and greetings of tens of thousands of faithful mem-

bers and friends of the Church in Europe.

### **Suffering Mankind**

I love America—my country—and so it is a joy to be home, but I love all of our father's children everywhere. I have seen them on both sides of the iron curtain, in forty-five nations in the last few years. Nineteen years ago I saw millions of them in Europe, hungry and cold as a result of the hell of war. I have been with them in bombed-out buildings, on their little farms, in their shops, in their homes. They are our Father's children, my brothers and sisters. I have a deep love for them.

Some of them have lost their freedom and are living in bondage under godless leaders. But there is a spark of divinity in all of them. Generally speaking they love the Lord. And our Father in heaven loves them. They want to live in freedom and peace. They want to be good neighbors. Many are confused, but they love their homes

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and families. They want to improve their standard of living. In their hearts they want to do what's right.

### America, Heaven-blessed

But with this love of our Father's children, I love America in a special way. The United States is not just another nation—not just one of the family of nations. This nation was intended to be a beacon to liberty-loving people everywhere. This is a choice land, for the Lord Jesus Christ—the God of this land—has so declared through his prophets. This is a land with a prophetic history which was held, as it were, in the hollow of God's hand to perform its great mission for the blessing of all peoples.

The Lord raised up the Founding Fathers. He it was who established the Constitution of this land—the greatest document of freedom ever written. This God-inspired Constitution is not outmoded. It is not an outdated "agrarian document" as some of our would-be statesmen, socialists, and fellow travelers of the godless conspiracy would have us believe. It was the Lord God who established the foundation of this nation; and woe be unto those—members of the Supreme Court and others—who would weaken this foundation.

I am sorry to say that I am saddened and sick at heart at what I see, at what has happened in the past few years and is happening today in my beloved country. But that is a subject for another time.

It was the Lord who created an atmosphere of freedom here in America so that his Church could be restored in its fullness for the blessing of all mankind. Here in these United States the Lord has established his base of operations in these last days. He selected America. That is why I love the United States of America in a special manner. Every true Latter-day Saint should love America.

No, the Lord's base of operations was not established by the General Authorities of the restored Church. The Lord himself prepared the way through the centuries. He established

his base of operations here in America, and it is the duty of every liberty-loving soul, and especially every Latter-day Saint, to help protect, safeguard, and strengthen the Lord's base of operations, because it is from this base that the glorious saving principles of the eternal gospel are going and will continue to go forth to the world to bless all of our Father's children and to provide a true basis for peace. There is no other way.

Yes, I love America, but it is about something else, closely related, that I now testify.

Today I desire to bear witness to the inspiration and divine mission of a truly noble character and the reality of the greatest event of the past nineteen centuries. The setting for both is here in the United States.

### Joseph Smith, American Prophet

Some thirty years ago the well-known Macmillan Company published a most significant book. On the flyleaf of this 400-page volume appeared a statement essentially as follows:

"Here is a man who was born in the stark hills of Vermont; who was reared in the backwoods of New York; who never looked inside a college or high school; who lived in six States, no one of which would own him during his lifetime; . . . who, even when he had his freedom, was hounded like a fugitive; who was covered once with a coat of tar and feathers, and left for dead; who, with his following, was driven by irate neighbors from New York to Ohio, from Ohio to Missouri, and from Missouri to Illinois; and who, at the unripe age of thirty-eight, was shot to death by a mob with painted faces.

"Yet this man became mayor of the biggest town in Illinois and the state's most prominent citizen, . . . the founder of cities and of a university, and aspired to become President of the United States.

"He wrote a book which has baffled the literary critics for [more than] a hundred [and thirty] years and which is today more widely read than any other volume save the Bible. On the threshold of an organizing age he

established the most nearly perfect social mechanism in the modern world, and developed a religious philosophy that challenges anything of its kind in history, for completeness and cohesion. And he set up the machinery for an economic system that would take the brood of Fears out of the heart of man—the fear of want through sickness, old age, unemployment, and poverty.

"In [fifty-three] nations are men and women who look upon him as a greater leader than Moses and a greater prophet than Isaiah; his disciples now number [over two] million; and already a granite shaft pierces the sky over the place where he was born, and another over the place where he . . . received the inspiration for his Book." (John Henry Evans.)

This book from which I have quoted is titled *Joseph Smith, an American Prophet*. I testify to you that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of God—one of the truly great prophets of all time. This I know and bear witness to all the world.

### The Martyr

Joseph Smith the Prophet went willingly to his death. He sealed his testimony with his life—his own blood. On that fateful day, 120 years ago in Nauvoo, Illinois, as he looked back upon his city and people whom he loved, on his way to Carthage Jail and his martyrdom, he declared:

"This is the loveliest place and the best people under the heavens; little do they know the trials that await them." (*DHC*, 6, 554.)

Later the Prophet said feelingly, but calmly and courageously:

"I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am as calm as a summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all men. If they take my life I shall die an innocent man, and my blood shall cry from the ground for vengeance, and it shall be said of me, 'He was murdered in cold blood!'" (*Ibid.*, 6, 555.)

Following his martyrdom his saddened and devoted followers who re-

vered him as a prophet of God issued to the world a statement which appears in a sacred volume of scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants, and which reads in part as follows:

"To seal the testimony of this book and the Book of Mormon, we announce the martyrdom of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith the Patriarch. They were shot in Carthage jail, on the 27th of June, 1844, about five o'clock p.m., by an armed mob—painted black—of from 150 to 200 persons. Hyrum was shot first and fell calmly, exclaiming: *I am a dead man!* Joseph leaped from the window, and was shot dead in the attempt, exclaiming: *O Lord my God!* They were both shot after they were dead, in a brutal manner, and both received four balls. . . .

### The Prophet of Salvation

"Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any . . . man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated!

". . . their *innocent blood* on the floor of Carthage jail is a broad seal affixed to 'Mormonism' that cannot be rejected by any court on earth, and their *innocent blood* . . . is a witness

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to the truth of the everlasting gospel that all the world cannot impeach; and . . . is an ambassador for the religion of Jesus Christ, that will touch the hearts of honest men among all nations. . . ." (D&C 135:1, 3, 7.)

Yes, Joseph Smith, the latter-day Prophet, was an instrument in the hands of the Lord in opening a new gospel dispensation—the last and greatest of all gospel dispensations.

He witnessed and participated in the greatest event that has transpired in this world since the resurrection of the Master.

Here is a partial description, in his own words, of that great and all-important event:

"After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desire of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

"But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction— . . . just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

"It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. 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!*" (Joseph Smith 2:15-17.)

This glorious vision of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, in broad daylight, in the spring of 1820, is the greatest event that has transpired

in this world since the resurrection of our Lord.

Joseph Smith, who witnessed it, was and is a prophet of God. Today some 12,000 missionaries and more than two million members of the Church throughout the free world are bearing witness of this important fact.

Mormonism has been before the world for 135 years. It has met mob violence, persecution, drivings, and deception by wicked men, and prejudice and misunderstandings by many people throughout the world. Yet, in spite of widespread opposition, ambassadors of truth have carried from the very beginning and are today carrying to the world the all-important message of the restored Church.

Paraphrasing the words of Apostle Paul: This thing has not been done in a corner. (Acts 26:26.)

The world has generally revered the ancient prophets dead and rejected the living ones. It was so with Joseph Smith. Truth is often on the scaffold—error on the throne. But time is on the side of truth, for truth is eternal.

### The Restored Gospel for the Modern World

The message of Mormonism is a world message. It is the truth. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a world organization.

In the early days of the restored Church, the Lord, in a revelation to Joseph Smith, addressing all of his children, both in and out of the restored Church, said this:

"Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

"For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated. . . .

"And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

"And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them.

"Behold this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the book of my commandments, which I have given them to publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth. . . .

"Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear: . . .

"Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; . . .

"And also those to whom these commandments were given, might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually—" (D&C 1:1-2, 4-6, 11, 17, 30.)

These are the words of Jesus Christ to his prophet and all the world.

The message of Joseph Smith—the message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the message of Mormonism—is the most important world message.

The Church is a world organization—the true Church of Jesus Christ restored to the earth in its fullness—and is intended to bless all of our Father's children.

These things I know and bear witness in humility and gratitude.

God lives, Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world, with his latter-day base of operations here in America,

and Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of the living God, as is our beloved present-day leader, David O. McKay.

This is my witness and testimony to all the world in humility and gratitude, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President N. Eldon Tanner:

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve has been our concluding speaker. At this point we should like to express our thanks and appreciation to this wonderful choir for their inspirational singing. We are most grateful for the warm response from the managers and operators of the many television and radio stations offering their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to millions throughout North America, South America, Africa, and many other parts of the world.

We shall now conclude the sixth session of the 135th Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with the Tabernacle Choir singing, "The King Of Love My Shepherd Is," conducted by Richard P. Condie with Alexander Schreiner at the organ. Following the singing the benediction will be pronounced by Elder Richard W. Maycock, formerly president of the Northern States Mission. This conference then will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The Tabernacle Choir sang "The King of Love My Shepherd Is."

Elder Richard W. Maycock, formerly president of the Northern States Mission, offered the closing prayer.