

Sunday, October 2

Third Day

Saturday evening an inspirational meeting of the priesthood of the Church was held in the Tabernacle. The proceedings of this meeting were relayed by closed-circuit broadcast, originating in the Tabernacle, to members of the priesthood assembled in approximately 471 separate locations in all parts of the United States and in Canada. Approximately 85,000 holders of the priesthood participated in this meeting. Members of the First Presidency, and Elder Bernard P. Brockbank, Assistant to the Twelve, and a member of the Church Information Committee, and Brother Arch L. Madsen, president of Church Broadcasting, were speakers on that occasion.

We extend a cordial welcome to all present this afternoon—special guests, educational leaders, our stake presidencies and bishoprics from near and far, temple presidencies, members of the general auxiliary boards, and members of the Church and friends everywhere who are listening in by radio and television.

The music for this session will be rendered by the Tabernacle Choir, with Richard P. Condie and Jay E. Welch conducting. Robert Cundick is at the organ.

We shall begin this service by the choir singing, "O Brother Man," a favorite poem by John Greenleaf Whittier, often quoted by President McKay which has been set to music by Brother LeRoy Robertson. The choir will be conducted by Jay E. Welch, Assistant Director.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson Of the Council of the Twelve

Humbly and gratefully I take as my theme for these brief remarks the following words from the inspiring opening address by President David O. McKay at the Friday morning session of this great conference.

"Efforts are being made to deprive man of his free agency, to steal from the individual his liberty. . . . There has been an alarming increase in the abandoning of the ideals that constitute the foundation of the Constitution of the United States. . . ."

The invocation will be offered by Elder Arthur R. Michaelis, President of the Bear River Stake.

Singing: "O Brother Man."

Invocation: President Arthur R. Michaelis, Bear River Stake.

President Joseph Fielding Smith:

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Richard P. Condie will now sing, "We Are Watchmen," with Sister Jessie Evans Smith as soloist.

Singing: "We Are Watchmen."

President N. Eldon Tanner:

I think you should know that President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote the text of that song, and the music is by Alexander Schreiner. President Smith is just too modest to mention that.

President Joseph Fielding Smith:

Well, I hope you will forgive me. (Laughter) You gave that applause a little too soon. I was going to say, for my weakness.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve will now address us. He will be followed by Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, Assistant to the Twelve.

I therefore speak on the subject: "Protecting Freedom—An Immediate Responsibility."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims that life is eternal, that it has purpose. We believe we lived as intelligent beings in a world of progress before this mortal life. Our life on this earth is a probation, a testing period, an opportunity for growth and experience in a physical world. It is all part of the plan of our Heavenly Father for the bene-

fit and blessing of us, his children.

This is to be done through a great and all-wise plan—the gospel of Jesus Christ. This master plan, if lived, will build men of character, men of strength, men of deep spirituality, Godlike men.

Free agency to preserve freedom

Basic to this all-important plan is our free agency, the right of choice. Free agency is an eternal principle. We enjoyed freedom of choice in the spirit world as spirit children. In fact, a counterplan to the gospel of our Lord was presented by Lucifer, a plan of force that would have robbed man of his freedom of choice. Lucifer's plan was rejected, and the scriptures tell us that he, with one-third of the hosts of heaven, was cast out; and they continue their opposition to God's plan, which is based on the freedom of the individual.

The scriptures make clear that there was a great war in heaven, a struggle over the principle of freedom, the right of choice. (See Moses 4:1-4; D&C 29:36-38; 76:25-27; Rev. 12:7-9.)

History, both sacred and secular, clearly records that the struggle to preserve and safeguard freedom has been a continuous one. Prophets of God, as watchmen on the towers, have proclaimed liberty. Holy men of God have led the fight against anarchy and tyranny. Moses was commanded to "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." (Lev. 25:10.)

Why have prophets of God been commanded to proclaim liberty and lead the battle to preserve freedom? Because freedom is basic to the great plan of the Lord. The gospel can prosper only in an atmosphere of freedom. This fact is confirmed by history, as well as by sacred scriptures. The right of choice—free agency—runs like a golden thread throughout the gospel plan of the Lord for the blessing of his children.

To a modern-day prophet the Lord declared that "it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another." In a revelation to the restored Church in 1833 the Lord declared:

"... 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.

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

"Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn.

"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." (D&C 98:5, 8-10.)

A year ago in a great general conference address on freedom and how it is threatened today, our beloved President warned us, saying, "I do not know that there was ever a time in the history of mankind when the Evil One seemed so determined to take from man his freedom." He went on to explain that "pernicious efforts and sinister schemes are cunningly and stealthily being fostered to deprive man of his individual freedom and have him revert to the life of the jungle." ("Man's Free Agency," *The Improvement Era*, Dec. 1965, pp. 1073, 1099.)

War against wisdom

Still earlier the First Presidency warned the Saints that "Satan is making war against all the wisdom that has come to men through their ages of experience. He is seeking to overturn and destroy the very foundations upon which society, government, and religion rest. He aims to have men adopt theories and practices which he induced their forefathers, over the ages, to adopt and try, only to be discarded by them when found unsound, impractical, and ruinous. He plans to destroy liberty and freedom—economic, political, and religious, and to set up in place thereof the greatest, most widespread, and most complete tyranny that has ever oppressed man. He is working under such perfect disguise that many do not recognize either him or his methods. . . . Without their knowing it, the people are being urged down paths that lead only to destruction. Satan never before had so firm a grip on this generation as he

Sunday, October 2

Third Day

has now." ("Message of the First Presidency," *The Improvement Era*, Nov. 1942, p. 761.)

In spite of the scriptural evidence and the counsel of modern-day prophets during the past more than 100 years, there are still some who seem to feel we have no responsibility to safeguard and strengthen our precious God-given freedom. There are some who apparently feel that the fight for freedom is separate from the gospel. They express it in several ways, but it generally boils down to this: Just live the gospel; there's no need to get involved in trying to save freedom and the Constitution or to stop Communism.

Of course, this is dangerous reasoning, because in reality you cannot fully live the gospel without working to save freedom and the Constitution, and to stop Communism.

In the war in heaven, what would have been your reaction if someone had told you just to do what is right—there's no need to get involved in the fight for freedom?

War in Heaven continues on Earth

Of course, the war in heaven over free agency is now being waged here on earth, and there are those today who are saying, "Look, don't get involved in the fight for freedom. Just live the gospel." That counsel is dangerous, self-contradictory, unsound.

The Book of Mormon pays tribute to General Moroni in these words: "And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery; . . .

"Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood." (Al. 48:11, 13.)

And then Moroni is paid this high tribute: "Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil

would never have power over the hearts of the children of men." (Al. 48:17.)

Now, part of the reason we may not have sufficient priesthood bearers to save the Constitution, let alone to shake the powers of hell, is because unlike Moroni, I fear, our souls do not joy in keeping our country free, and we are not firm in the faith of Christ, nor have we sworn with an oath to defend our rights and the liberty of our country.

Need for action now

Moroni raised a title of liberty and wrote upon it these words: "In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children." Why didn't he write upon it: "Just live your religion; there's no need to concern yourselves about your freedom, your peace, your wives, or your children"? The reason he didn't do this was because all these things were a part of his religion, as they are of our religion today.

Should we counsel people, "Just live your religion. There's no need to get involved in the fight for freedom"? No, we should not, because our stand for freedom is a most basic part of our religion; this stand helped get us to this earth, and our reaction to freedom in this life will have eternal consequences. Man has many duties, but he has no excuse that can compensate for his loss of liberty.

As members of the Church we have some close quarters to pass through if we are going to get home safely. We will be given a chance to choose between conflicting counsel given by some. That's why we must learn—and the sooner we learn, the better—to keep our eye on the Prophet, the President of the Church. And that Prophet today is President David O. McKay.

On the day the Church was organized, the Lord gave a revelation, too often overlooked, that he expects members of the Church to "give heed unto all his words and commandments which" the Prophet and President "shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith." (D&C 21:4-5.)

Wisdom needed

All men are entitled to inspiration, especially men who bear the priesthood, but only one man is the Lord's mouthpiece. Some lesser men have used in the past, and will use in the future, their offices unrighteously. Some will, ignorantly or otherwise, use their office to promote false counsel; some will use it to lead the unwary astray; some will use it to persuade us that all is well in Zion: some will use it to cover and excuse their ignorance. Keep your eye on the Prophet, for the Lord will never permit his Prophet to lead this Church astray. Let us live close to the Spirit, so we can test all counsel.

Now, after all the counsel that has been given, what did President McKay have to say to the priesthood at our last annual world conference in April? Fortunately, his inspired words were printed on the editorial page of the *June Improvement Era* and have been reprinted in folder form by the Deseret Book Company as "the position of the Church." It would be well if every family in America could have a copy. You who have felt that you can righteously avoid standing up for freedom, heed these words:

Counsel given

"In order that there may be no misunderstanding by bishops, stake presidents, and others regarding members of the Church participating in non-church meetings to study and become informed on the Constitution of the United States, Communism, etc., I wish," said President McKay, "to make the following statements that I have been sending out from my office for some time and that have come under question by some stake authorities, bishoprics, and others.

"Church members are at perfect liberty to act according to their own consciences in the matter of safeguarding our way of life. They are, of course, encouraged to honor the highest standards of the gospel and to work to preserve their own free-

doms. They are free to participate in nonchurch meetings that are held to warn people of the threat of Communism or any other theory or principle that will deprive us of our free agency or individual liberties vouchsafed by the Constitution of the United States. . . .

"The position of this Church on the subject of Communism has never changed. We consider it the greatest satanical threat to peace, prosperity, and the spread of God's work among men that exists on the face of the earth.

"In this connection," President McKay continues, "we are continually being asked to give our opinion concerning various patriotic groups or individuals who are fighting Communism and speaking up for freedom. Our immediate concern, however, is not with parties, groups, or persons, but with principles. We therefore commend and encourage every person and every group who are sincerely seeking to study Constitutional principles and awaken a sleeping and apathetic people to the alarming conditions that are rapidly advancing about us. We wish all of our citizens throughout the land were participating in some type of organized self-education in order that they could better appreciate what is happening and know what they can do about it.

"Supporting the FBI, the police, the congressional committees investigating Communism, and various organizations that are attempting to awaken the people through educational means is a policy we warmly endorse for all our people." (*The Improvement Era*, June 1966, p. 477.)

Everyone should study the complete statement. This statement is timely and clear. The need for such a Church position has never been greater. I realize that it is sometimes unpopular to speak the solemn warning truth. As a people, we do not like to be disturbed from our comfortable complacency. But today we are face to face with an increasingly successful, ruthless conspiracy. Our remaining liberties are hanging in the balance.

Hear President McKay's further counsel:

Sunday, October 2

Third Day

"Next to being one in worshiping God, there is nothing in this world upon which this Church should be more united than in upholding and defending the Constitution of the United States." (*The Instructor*, Feb. 1956, p. 34.)

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., emphasized this fact as he discussed the freedom-slavery issue, from which I quote:

"Now, what has business and industry done about all this revolutionary activity? . . . Business and industry neither planned nor did anything effective. There was no concerted effort. . . .

"A common cause with a united front would have worked salvation for us. But business officials were afraid of their stockholders and their outcry against loss of dividends; the lawyers were afraid of getting whipped in the courts, businessmen felt strong vigorous action might further disturb business; bankers (I am a bank director) shivered at their own shadows.

"So one constitutional right after another yielded without any real contest, our backs getting nearer to the wall with each retreat. It is now proposed we retreat still further. Is not this suicide? Is there anyone so naive as to think that things will right themselves without a fight? There has been no more fight in us than there is in a bunch of sheep, and we have been much like sheep. Freedom was never brought to a people on a silver platter, nor maintained with whisk brooms and lavender sprays. . . .

"And do not think that all these usurpations, intimidations, and impositions are being done to us through inadvertence or mistake.

"The whole course is deliberately planned and carried out; its purpose is to destroy the Constitution and our constitutional government; then to bring chaos, out of which the new Statism, with its Slavery, is to arise, with a cruel, relentless, selfish, ambitious crew in the saddle, riding hard with whip and spur, a red-shrouded band of night riders for despotism.

". . . if we do not vigorously fight for our liberties, we shall go clear through to the end of the road and

become another Russia, or worse." (*Church News*, Sept. 25, 1949.)

"A bunch of sheep." An old adage declares, "A society of sheep must in time beget a government of wolves."

In a general conference, President Clark issued this sobering warning: ". . . I say unto you with all the soberness I can, that we stand in danger of losing our liberties, and that once lost, only blood will bring them back; and once lost, we of this church will, in order to keep the church going forward, have more sacrifices to make and more persecutions to endure than we have yet known, heavy as our sacrifices and grievous as our persecutions of the past have been.

"We face a war to the death, a gigantic worldwide struggle. We must face it, enter it, take part in it. In fact, we are all taking part in the struggle, whether we will or not. Upon its final issue, liberty lives or dies." (*The Improvement Era*, May 1944.)

Yes, we all love the gospel—or should do. We should all strive to live according to its precepts. But the basic thread running through the gospel plan is the freedom, the right of choice, of the individual. The gospel can prosper only where there is freedom.

Loss of freedom

I have personally witnessed the heart-rending results of the loss of freedom. I have been close to the godless evil of the socialist-communist conspiracy on both sides of the iron curtain, especially during my service as European Mission president at the close of the war and today, and also during eight years in the Cabinet.

I stood in Czechoslovakia and witnessed the ebbing away of freedom, resulting in the total loss of liberty. I visited among the liberty-loving Polish people and talked with their leaders, as the insidious freedom-destroying philosophy moved in, imposing the chains of bondage on a Christian nation.

In both of these freedom-loving nations were members of the Church, striving, as we are, to live the gospel. But it was not enough. It did not

stop the Communists. Our members were few in number, and the danger to freedom seemed far away. One trembles at the thought of members of the Church today in the Communist slave labor camps.

In fact, freedom-loving people have been brought under Communist bondage at the average rate of 6,000 per hour, 144,000 per day, 52 million per year since the end of World War II.

Priesthood to save freedom

But here in America, the Lord's base of operations—so designated by the Lord himself, through his holy prophets—we of the priesthood, members of his restored Church, might well provide the balance of power to save our freedom. Indeed we might, if we go forward as General Moroni of old and raise the standard of liberty throughout the land.

Today our Prophet and President has said: "No greater immediate responsibility rests upon members of the Church, upon all citizens of this Republic and of neighboring Republics than to protect the freedom vouchsafed by the Constitution of the United

States." Is this plain enough? In view of this solemn warning, how can any member of the Church fail to act to help save our freedom? We must not be lulled away into a false security.

We have a Prophet today. What we need is a listening ear. Let us live the gospel in its fullness, and by so doing we will work unceasingly to preserve and strengthen our God-given freedom.

I bear witness that David O. McKay is a Prophet of God—I know it as I know that I live—and that through him the Lord reveals his will for each of us, our families, and the kingdom of God on earth. God grant we may heed his inspired counsel, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Joseph Fielding Smith:

We have just listened to Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, Assistant to the Twelve, will be our next speaker.

Elder ElRay L. Christiansen

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brethren and sisters: I concur in what has been said just now by Elder Benson, and I would like to add one other essentiality to which we must adhere and which we must follow in our lives. That is, that Jesus pointed the way through our difficulties.

During the time that Jesus was on earth, many people were curious to know whether or not he was the expected Messiah. These people were of two classes: those who *hoped* he was and those who *feared* he might be.

"If any will do His will"

Those who hoped he was and who sought to know of a certainty received positive answer in testimony through the Spirit and rejoiced because of it. It is possible that those who feared that he might be the Christ made no

serious effort to find out, and because of this lack of effort, they received no spiritual witness. They doubted the many physical evidences before their eyes, even though such evidences fulfilled scriptural declarations to the letter. They seized upon isolated statements lifted out of context in an attempt to justify their doubtings.

And it is the same today. There are those who have complete assurance of his divinity, and there are those who fear that he is divine. So, although nearly twenty centuries have rolled by and volumes have been written of him, yet these questions are still asked: "Is Jesus indeed the Redeemer of the world? And if he is, to what degree do his teachings apply to me and my generation?"

If I should ask you what you think of the policies advocated by certain