

## Elder ElRay L. Christiansen

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My brothers and sisters: The destiny of America can be realized and the work of the Lord can be accomplished only through the exercising of the guarantees given us in the Constitution of the United States.

As part of an official declaration setting forth the belief of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in relation to civil power, we may read the following in the Doctrine and Covenants:

**Government instituted for benefit of man**

"We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society. . . .

"We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly. . . ." (D&C 134:1, 5.)

**Power of government derived from will of the people**

As you know, the government of the United States is a republic. The genius of this form of government is that the foundation of all law, power, and authority is derived from the will of the people.

Such a government is based upon a written constitution, which provides for three divisions of government: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial, each independent of the others, having certain powers within prescribed limitations through a "built-in" system of checks and balances, in order that the rights and freedoms of the people may be insured.

The leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have taught

its members ever since its organization to honor and respect the Constitution of the United States as well as the men who brought it forth and who were patriots indeed!

Joseph Smith described the constitution as a "heavenly banner," a "glorious standard."

One of our great international lawyers, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., at one time declared:

**Constitution an inspired document**

" . . . Out of the depths of eternal truth was born the Constitution of the United States. . . . It is my conviction that God inspired the indicting of that document, the Constitution becomes sacred scripture to me. It is the greatest political heritage ever bequeathed by fathers to their posterity. God grant that we may preserve it." ("Gratitude for our Heritage," pp. 9-10.)

And the Lord himself has declared that "it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another. And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this . . . purpose. . . ." (D&C 101:79-80.) And he said that it "should be maintained for the . . . protection of all flesh. . . ." (D&C 101:77.)

**Constitutional rights**

Thus, *under the guidance of the Lord* was established a government based upon a written constitution in which were set forth the laws whereby its citizens were to maintain their freedom, freedom for us—

To live,  
To pray and worship,  
To work,  
To own property,  
To keep and bear arms,  
To educate our children,  
To assemble together,  
To be tried by a jury,

To speak without fear of being cast into jail,

To go where we choose and do as we wish, so long as we do not jeopardize the rights, the welfare, and the safety of others.

Doubtless in all the world there is no document to compare with this "heavenly banner," this "glorious standard," the Constitution of the United States!

### Good administration of government

But in any society, *good government* can be had only if administered by *good men*, selected by *good citizens*.

To be a good citizen, we should learn for ourselves what is set forth in the constitution. This knowledge can be obtained only through individual study of the document itself. We must not only study it, but we must also guard it. It was Daniel Webster who uttered these prophetic words: "Watchful guardianship over the Constitution is the proper means for its support. . . ."

In addition to the love of God and the love of our neighbor and, as Jesus said, the love of our enemies, there should be found in each of us a love of our country and of the constitution which binds it together.

### Cherish constitution in the home

It is the obligation of parents to acquaint their children with this great document:

1. That they may have understanding of and appreciation for the principles that make their liberty and freedom possible.

2. They should be taught as well what their personal obligations will be when they become mature citizens of the United States.

3. We must see to it that they learn the factual history of our country.

4. They must be made to recognize and resist the constantly fomented ideologies that threaten the very life of our republic, the *individual* liberties of our people, and the God-given heritage of freedom. One of the greatest contributions of a free people is to

transmit that freedom to their children.

We must remember that reverence for and obedience to law should begin in the home. President David O. McKay has warned that "no greater immediate responsibility rests upon the 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." (*The Improvement Era*, May 1950, p. 378.)

In the face of the conditions as they are today, it seems imperative that individuals develop loyalty to their country and responsibility for their own behavior. Such attributes are ideally based on knowledge, which requires deliberate effort to obtain. Thomas Paine, one of the early patriots, reminded us that "what we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly."

### Uphold the Constitution

We need not fear invasions from without, so long as we as a nation and as a people understand and uphold the Constitution of the United States, and reject not the God of the land who is Jesus Christ. But if we permit ourselves to forget God, we have no promise!

Moved upon by the Holy Spirit, the Prophet Lehi prophesied this regarding America:

"Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the *righteous it shall be blessed forever.*" (2 Ne. 1:7. Italics added.)

What a simple recipe for peace and safety in this choice land!

### Pledge our sacred honor

Like the patriots of old who, under extreme difficulties and discouragements, hammered out our constitution,

Sunday, October 1

Third Day

may we say of that inspired document:

"And for the support of this . . . with a firm reliance upon the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." (Declaration of Independence.)

I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown

Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

Elder Henry D. Taylor, also an Assistant to the Twelve, will speak to us now.

### Elder Henry D. Taylor

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

As the Savior went up into a mountain, a great multitude followed him, absorbing with eagerness his profound and divine teachings. Among his instructions was this interesting challenge: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) That same counsel to strive to become perfect applies to the followers of the Lord today, as well as it did to those in the meridian of time.

#### Achievement of perfection

For mortal man, with all his limitations and weaknesses, to achieve perfection might seem impossible, but the Savior's admonition, given on several different occasions, would indicate that such a worthy goal is attainable.

We recognize that the Savior achieved perfection. However, it was a gradual and continuing process, extending from childhood to maturity. John, the beloved apostle, attests to this natural development in these words: "And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace . . . until he received a fulness." (D&C 93:12-13.)

When he was but 12 years of age, Jesus realized that he was the son of a divine father. When Joseph and Mary, his mother, found him conversing with the wise men in the temple and mildly chided him because of their concern, he replied: ". . . wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49.) Yet the full comprehension of the purpose

of his earthly mission developed within him only as he progressed step by step in unfolding experience and wisdom.

#### Perfection through adversity

Perfection came to Jesus through many experiences, which involved trials and sorrows. Although begotten of an immortal father, he was born of a mortal mother, through whom he inherited the capacity to be tempted, to suffer, and to die. The apostle Paul testified: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:8-9.)

#### Emulate His example:

With the Lord Jesus as an example, we should desire and attempt to pattern our lives after his and follow his teachings in our quest for perfection.

What were his characteristics? Though they are many, time will permit mentioning but a few:

First, he was kind and forgiving. When a woman accused of a sinful act was brought before him, he faced her accusers with the challenge: ". . . He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." (John 8:7.) As he bent down to write upon the ground, her conscience-stricken accusers slunk away. When he raised his head, he noted that only the woman remained. Of her he asked: "Women, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?"