

Thursday, April 6

I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

"Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me." (Al. 5:45-46.)

Yes, "the Spirit enlighteneth every man that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit."

I bear testimony that by the witness of the Spirit one can come to know of

the divinity of this great work, that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was divinely called, that President Joseph Fielding Smith is a prophet of God, and that this gospel is the great plan of life and salvation as instituted of the Lord. This is my personal testimony to you, my brethren and sisters, and I leave it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. □

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder James A. Cullimore, Assistant to the Twelve, has just addressed us. 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

My beloved brothers and sisters, seen and unseen—and we are all brothers and sisters, children of the same Father in the spirit—humbly and gratefully I stand before you on this anniversary date of the organization of the restored church of Jesus Christ, 142 years ago. I love a general conference of the Church, except this particular part, and yet I rejoice in the opportunity to bear testimony to this the greatest work in all the world.

Persian anniversary

Last fall I was invited by Baron von Blomberg, president of the United Religions Organization, to represent the Church as a guest of the king of Persia at the twenty-five hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great. Advised by the First Presidency to accept the invitation, I left immediately following the October conference to join with representatives of twenty-seven world religions, some fifty monarchs, and other notables at this historic celebration in Iran.

King Cyrus

King Cyrus lived more than five hundred years before Christ and figured in prophecies of the Old Testament mentioned in 2 Chronicles and the book of Ezra, and by the prophets Ezekial, Isaiah, and Daniel. The Bible states how "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia." (2 Chron. 36:22.) Cyrus restored certain political and social rights to the captive Hebrews, gave them permission to return to Jerusalem, and directed that Jehovah's temple should be rebuilt.

Parley P. Pratt, in describing the Prophet Joseph Smith, said that he had "the boldness, courage, temperance, perseverance and generosity of a Cyrus." (*Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* [Deseret Book Company, 1938], p. 46.)

President Wilford Woodruff said: "Now I have thought many times that some of those ancient kings that were raised up, had in some respects more regard for the carrying out of some of these principles and laws, than even the Latter-day Saints have in

our day. I will take as an ensample Cyrus. . . . To trace the life of Cyrus from his birth to his death, whether he knew it or not, it looked as though he lived by inspiration in all his movements. He began with that temperance and virtue which would sustain any Christian country or any Christian king. . . . Many of these principles followed him, and I have thought many of them were worthy, in many respects, the attention of men who have the Gospel of Jesus Christ." (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 22, p. 207.)

Use of good men

God, the Father of us all, uses the men of the earth, especially good men, to accomplish his purposes. It has been true in the past, it is true today, it will be true in the future.

"Perhaps the Lord needs such men on the outside of His Church to help it along," said the late Elder Orson F. Whitney of the Quorum of the Twelve. "They are among its auxiliaries, and can do more good for the cause where the Lord has placed them, than anywhere else. . . . Hence, some are drawn into the fold and receive a testimony of the truth; while others remain unconverted. . . . the beauties and glories of the gospel being veiled temporarily from their view, for a wise purpose. The Lord will open their eyes in His own due time. God is using more than one people for the accomplishment of His great and marvelous work. The Latter-day Saints cannot do it all. It is too vast, too arduous for any one people. . . . We have no quarrel with the Gentiles. They are our partners in a certain sense." (*Conference Report*, April 1928, p. 59.)

This would certainly have been true of Colonel Thomas L. Kane, a true friend of the Saints in their dire need. It was true of General Doniphan, who, when ordered by his superior to shoot Joseph Smith, said: "It is cold blooded murder. I will not obey your order. . . . and if you execute these men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly

tribunal, so help me God." (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, p. 241.)

We honor these partners because their devotion to correct principles overshadowed their devotion to popularity, party, or personalities.

Founding fathers

We honor our founding fathers of this republic for the same reason. God raised up these patriotic partners to perform their mission, and he called them "wise men." (See D&C 101:80.) The First Presidency acknowledged that wisdom when they gave us the guideline a few years ago of supporting political candidates "who are truly dedicated to the Constitution in the tradition of our Founding Fathers." (*Deseret News*, November 2, 1964.) That tradition has been summarized in the book *The American Tradition* by Clarence Carson.

The Lord said that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." (Luke 16:8.) Our wise founders seemed to understand, better than most of us, our own scripture, which states that "it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority . . . they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion." (D&C 121:39.)

Allegiance to Constitution

To help prevent this, the founders knew that our elected leaders should be bound by certain fixed principles. Said Thomas Jefferson: "In questions of power then, let no more be heard of confidence in man but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution."

These wise founders, our patriotic partners, seemed to appreciate more than most of us the blessings of the boundaries that the Lord set within the Constitution, for he said, "And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil." (D&C 98:7.)

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In God the founders trusted, and in his Constitution—not in the arm of flesh. "O Lord," said Nephi, "I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; . . . cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm." (2 Ne. 4:34.)

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., put it well when he said:

"God provided that in this land of liberty, our political allegiance shall run not to individuals, that is, to government officials, no matter how great or how small they may be. Under His plan our allegiance and the only allegiance we owe as citizens or denizens of the United States, runs to our inspired Constitution which God himself set up. So runs the oath of office of those who participate in government. A certain loyalty we do owe to the office which a man holds, but even here we owe just by reason of our citizenship, no loyalty to the man himself. In other countries it is to the individual that allegiance runs. This principle of allegiance to the Constitution is basic to our freedom. It is one of the great principles that distinguishes this 'land of liberty' from other countries." (*Improvement Era*, July 1940, p. 444.)

Patriotism

"Patriotism," said Theodore Roosevelt, "means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the President or any other public official save exactly to the degree in which he himself stands by the country. . . ."

"Every man," said President Roosevelt, "who parrots the cry of 'stand by the President' without adding the proviso 'so far as he serves the Republic' takes an attitude as essentially unmanly as that of any Stuart royalist who championed the doctrine that the King could do no wrong. No self-respecting and intelligent free man could take such an attitude." (Theodore Roosevelt, *Works*, vol. 21, pp. 316, 321.) And yet as Latter-day Saints we should

pray for our civic leaders and encourage them in righteousness.

Support of candidates

". . . to vote for wicked men, it would be sin," said Hyrum Smith. (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 323.)

And the Prophet Joseph Smith said, ". . . let the people of the whole Union, like the inflexible Romans, whenever they find a promise made by a candidate that is not practiced as an officer, hurl the miserable sycophant from his exaltation. . . ." (*DHC*, vol. 6, p. 207.)

Joseph and Hyrum's trust did not run to the arm of flesh, but to God and correct eternal principles. "I am the greatest advocate of the Constitution of the United States there is on the earth," said the Prophet Joseph Smith. (*DHC*, vol. 6, p. 56.)

The warning of President Joseph Fielding Smith is most timely: "Now I tell you it is time the people of the United States were waking up with the understanding that if they don't save the Constitution from the dangers that threaten it, we will have a change of government." (*Conference Report*, April 1950, p. 159.)

Another guideline given by the First Presidency was "to support good and conscientious candidates, of either party, who are aware of the great dangers" facing the free world. (*Deseret News*, November 2, 1964.)

Fortunately we have materials to help us face these threatening dangers in the writings of President David O. McKay and other church leaders. Some other fine sources by LDS authors attempting to awaken and inform us of our duty are: *Prophets, Principles, and National Survival* (Jerreld L. Newquist), *Many Are Called But Few Are Chosen* (H. Verlan Andersen), and *The Elders of Israel and the Constitution* (Jerome Horowitz).

But the greatest handbook for freedom in this fight against evil is the Book of Mormon.

Standard in scriptures

This leads me to the second great civic standard for the Saints. For in addition to our inspired Constitution, we have the scriptures.

Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon was the "keystone of our religion" and the "most correct" book on earth. (*DHC*, vol. 6, p. 56.) This most correct book on earth states that the downfall of two great American civilizations came as a result of secret conspiracies whose desire was to overthrow the freedom of the people. "And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking," says Moroni, "and also the destruction of the people of 'Nephi.'" (Eth. 8:21.)

Now undoubtedly Moroni could have pointed out many factors that led to the destruction of the people, but notice how he singled out the secret combinations, just as the Church today could point out many threats to peace, prosperity, and the spread of God's work, but it has singled out the greatest threat as the godless conspiracy. There is no conspiracy theory in the Book of Mormon—it is a conspiracy fact.

Then Moroni speaks to us in this day and says, "Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you. . . ." (Eth. 8:24.)

The Book of Mormon further warns that "whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold they shall be destroyed. . . ." (Eth. 8:22.)

Dangers ahead

This scripture should alert us to what is ahead unless we repent, because there is no question but that as people of the free world, we are increasingly upholding many of the

evils of the adversary today. By court edict godless conspirators can run for government office, teach in our schools, hold office in labor unions, work in our defense plants, serve in our merchant marines, etc. As a nation, we are helping to underwrite many evil revolutionaries in our country.

Now we are assured that the Church will remain on the earth until the Lord comes again—but at what price? The Saints in the early days were assured that Zion would be established in Jackson County, but look at what their unfaithfulness cost them in bloodshed and delay.

President Clark warned us 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. . . ." (*CR*, April 1944, p. 116.) And he stated that if the conspiracy "comes here it will probably come in its full vigor and there will be a lot of vacant places among those who guide and direct, not only this government, but also this Church of ours." (*CR*, April 1952.)

Word of living prophets

Now the third great civic standard for the Saints is the inspired word of the prophets—particularly the living president, God's mouthpiece on the earth today. Keep your eye on the captain and judge the words of all lesser authority by his inspired counsel.

The story is told how Brigham Young, driving through a community, saw a man building a house and simply told him to double the thickness of his walls. Accepting President Young as a prophet, the man changed his plans and doubled the walls. Shortly afterward a flood came through that town, resulting in much destruction, but this man's walls stood. While

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putting the roof on his house, he was heard singing, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet!"

Joseph Smith taught "that a prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such." (*DHC*, vol. 5, p. 265.)

Promptings of Holy Spirit

Suppose a leader of the Church were to tell you that you were supporting the wrong side of a particular issue. Some might immediately resist this leader and his counsel or ignore it, but I would suggest that you first apply the fourth great civic standard for the faithful Saints. That standard is to live for, to get, and then to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Said Brigham Young: "I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by Him. . . . Let every man and woman know, by the whisperings of the Spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates, or not." (*JD*, vol. 9, p. 150.)

A number of years ago, because of a statement that appeared to represent the policy of the Church, a faithful member feared he was supporting the wrong candidate for public office. Humbly he took the matter up with the Lord. Through the Spirit of the Lord he gained the conviction of the course he should follow, and he dropped his support of this particular candidate. This good brother, by fervent prayer, got the answer that in time proved to be the right course.

We urge all men to read the Book of Mormon and then ask God if it is true. And the promise is sure that they may know of its truthfulness through the Holy Ghost, "and by the power of the Holy Ghost [men] may know the truth of all things." (*Moro*. 10:5.)

We need the constant guidance of that Spirit. We live in an age of deceit.

"O my people," said Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, "they who lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths." (2 *Ne*. 13:12.) Even within the Church we have been warned that "the ravening wolves are amongst us, from our own membership, and they, more than any others, are clothed in sheep's clothing, because they wear the habiliments of the priesthood." (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *CR*, April 1949, p. 163.)

The Lord holds us accountable if we are not wise and are deceived. "For they that are wise," he said, "and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day." (*D&C* 45:57.)

Civic standards

And so four great civic standards for the faithful Saints are, first, the Constitution ordained by God through wise men; second, the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon; third, the inspired counsel of the prophets, especially the living president, and fourth, the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

God bless us all that we may use these standards and by so doing bless ourselves, our families, our community, our nation, and the world, I humbly pray, as I bear my witness to the truth of this great latter-day work, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. □

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us.

The morning session Saturday, in addition to being broadcast direct, will be video-taped and released to many television stations Sunday morning to the eastern and central parts of the United States, Canada, Hawaii, and bases of the Armed Forces throughout the Pacific and carried by radio to Vietnam.