

President Harold B. Lee

First Counselor in the First Presidency

This year is again a most important year of decision for our day. Some have even said that this is the most critical period in the history of this nation and of the world.

I believe it is an illusion to say that this is *the* most critical, decisive time. Write it upon the hearts of all of us that every dispensation has been just as decisive, and likewise that every year has been the most decisive year and time for ourselves, for this nation, and for the world. This is our day and time when honorable men must be brought forward to meet the tremendous challenges before us.

Political activity

This is the beginning of an intense political activity, when men of every persuasion in the political arena will be clamoring for attention and acceptance by the electorate. There will be controversy, debate, conflict, and contention, which seem to be the order of a political campaign.

In its loftiest sense, controversy may mean disputations because of honest differences of opinion. In its most degrading sense it may mean quarreling, strife, and name-calling. An example of that which degrades is the bitter personal abuse that so frequently is heaped upon an opposing candidate. Name-calling is continued throughout the whole season until listeners are left with doubt and mistrust that honor and integrity are to be found in any of those who may eventually be elected. The obvious hazard is that when these elected leaders have been maligned and downgraded, the seeds of disrespect to authority and law and order are sown in the minds of youth, particularly, instead of respectful obedience to counsel and to the laws enacted by those whose integrity and honesty have been thus impugned.

Support of nation's leaders

The story, presumably authentic, is told that during the Civil War when the fortunes of the Union armies, under the command of General Grant, were going badly, some concerned ministers called on President Abraham Lincoln at the White House and forcefully urged the dismissal of Grant.

To these men he is alleged to have said: "Gentlemen, General Grant has under his command all that we hold dear in this nation. Instead of criticism, you too should get down on your knees and pray God that he would see this nation through to victory."

We related this story to a president of the United States some years ago and assured him that no matter what his name or his political party, we too were frequently on our knees, praying God that he and the leaders of this nation and of the world would bring us through the crises of the present.

We were heartened by the president's reply when he said, "I think that every president of this country during his term of office has been frequently on his knees praying to Almighty God."

During these years of extreme tension, you may constantly have in mind the admonition of the Lord himself: "Wherefore, be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet," and likewise he reminds us that "he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land." (D&C 58:22, 21.)

Conflicting dominions

We have recorded the angelic refrain at the time of the Savior's birth as recorded by Luke: ". . . on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14.)

In seeming contradiction to that message are the recorded words of the Master: "Think not that I am come

to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father. . . . And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. 10:34-36.)

How can these seemingly contradictory quotations be reconciled?

The earliest revelations of this dispensation speak of two so-called conflicting dominions on the earth today. One is spoken of as the dominion of the devil, "when peace shall be taken from the earth." (D&C 1:35.)

In the book of Revelation, as well as in other scriptures, we read that before the earth was peopled "there was war in heaven." (Rev. 12:7.)

One of the ambitious sons of God's spiritual creations in the premortal world promised salvation for all mankind without effort on their part, provided he would be given almighty power, even to the dethroning of God himself, whose divine right it is to reign over the earth. Intense bitterness ensued between that son, who became Satan, and those who followed after him, and the beloved Son of God and those who followed after him, whose plan of salvation, by contrast, would give to every soul the right of choice, and the glory be to the Father. He even offered himself as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), that by the redemption of his atoning sacrifice, "all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Article of Faith 3).

Satan and his hosts were cast out because he set about to destroy the agency of man, and he became the author of falsehood to deceive and to blind men and to lead captive all who would not hearken to the words and teachings of God's eternal plan.

The other dominion in the earth today of which the scriptures speak is the Lord's dominion, when he "shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst." (D&C 1:36.)

Demands to exercise self-will

Today we are constantly hearing, from the unenlightened and misguided, who demand what they call free agency, by which they apparently mean, as evidenced by their conduct, that they have their agency to do as they please or to exercise their own self-will to determine what is law and order, what is right and wrong, or what is honor and virtue.

These are frightening expressions when you reflect upon what I have just quoted from the revealed word of God. A moment's reflection will help you to see that when one sets himself up to make his own rules and presumes to know no law but his own, he is but echoing the plan of Satan, who sought to ascend to God's throne, as it were, in being the judge of all that rules mankind and the world. There has ever been, and ever will be, a conflict between the forces of truth and error; between the forces of righteousness and the forces of evil; between the dominion of Satan and the dominion under the banner of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

True free agency

The true meaning of free agency is clearly set forth by a father who explained to his son:

"Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh. . . . And they *are* free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men [meaning the atonement of the Savior], or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil. . . ." (2 Ne. 2:27.)

". . . the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other." (2 Ne. 2:16.)

What would it be like if we were to live in a vacuum, with everything coming our way without any effort or struggle on our part to overcome these obstacles?

Sunday, April 9

Proposal to college student

One of my esteemed colleagues told me of his efforts to aid a young college student who was feeling sorry for himself, who was lacking motivation and had no sense of responsibility. My friend made an attractive proposal to this young man. In a conversation that went something like this, he said, "Son, I'm going to take over full responsibility of your affairs from now on and relieve you of your worries. I'll pay your tuition at college, buy your clothes, furnish you an automobile and a credit card for gasoline. When you get ready to marry, don't worry about it; I'll look for a wife for you, and I will supply you with a house that is furnished. I'll support you and your family thereafter without any effort on your part. What do you think of my offer?"

After a moment of sobered thinking the young man replied, "Well, if you did that, what would there be for me to live for?"

Then my friend replied, "That is what I'm trying to make you see, my boy. That is the purpose of life—there is no joy without struggle and the exercise of one's own natural abilities."

Meaning of truth

Now in the exercise of the God-given right of free agency, or freedom of choice, how may one distinguish between what is truth and what is error?

A noted columnist wrote: "Truth is the logic of the universe. It is the reasoning of destiny; it is the mind of God. And nothing that man can devise can take its place." (Frank Crane.)

Another man of wisdom added: "There is no progress in fundamental truth. We may grow in knowledge of its meaning and in the modes of its application, but its great principles will forever be the same." (Hamilton Wright Mabie.)

At the time of Christ's arraignment before Pilate, the Master declared that his whole mission was to bear witness

of the truth. Pilate then asked: "What is truth?"

Whether or not the Savior answered that question on that occasion, we have no record; but in our day the Lord himself *has* answered, as he might have answered Pilate at that time, and I quote his words: "And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning." (D&C 93:24-25.)

The Light of Christ

Now, may I for a few moments speak of certainties upon which one may depend in his search for truth.

The first of which I would speak is that which is referred to in the scriptures as the Light of Christ, the Spirit of Truth, or Spirit of God, variously spoken of, which in essence means the influence of Deity that proceeds forth from the presence of God, that which quickens the understanding of man. (See D&C 88:49.) The apostle John spoke of it as "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1:9.)

A president of the Church makes this further explanation: "There is not a man [or person] born into the world, but has a portion of the Spirit of God, and it is that Spirit of God which gives to his spirit understanding, . . . each in accordance with his capacity to receive the light . . . [which] will never cease to strive with man, until man is brought to the possession of the higher intelligence." (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 63, 62.)

To those not acquainted with the language of the scriptures, it might be explained that the Light of Christ could be described as one's conscience, or the voice of the divine within one's own soul.

Counsel to public officials

As a public official in my young manhood, I was given some wise coun-

sel by a Church leader. He said: "The only thing we will ever ask you to do is to vote for that which in your heart you feel is right. We would rather many times over that you would make a mistake doing that which you felt was right, than to vote for policy sake."

I pass these wise words of counsel to others in public office for what they are worth and strongly urge that those of you having heavy responsibilities in public office or elsewhere should meditate prayerfully and give the Lord a chance to aid you in solving the problems of life.

"Expedients are for an hour," someone has said, "but principles are for the ages." (Henry Ward Beecher.)

Positive teachings of gospel

Now another certainty of which I would speak:

The Constitution of the United States has been mentioned several times by speakers in this conference as the basis of wise decisions in fundamental principles as applied to all matters pertaining to law and order, because it was framed by men whom God raised up for this very purpose. But in addition to that inspired document, we must always keep in mind that the greatest weapons that can be forged against any false philosophy are the positive teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We constantly impress upon all who go out as true ambassadors of the kingdom of God to follow the wise counsel of the apostle Paul, one of the ablest defenders of the faith of all time. In his declaration to the Corinthians he has given us his counsel if we would be as powerful as he in our ministry. This was his secret in combating evil:

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

"For I am determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:1-2, 5.)

Teaching the truth

It has been well said that one does not teach honesty by telling a man how to burglarize a safe, nor do we teach chastity by telling a youth all about sexual activities.

So, likewise, it is inspired wisdom that our efforts must be spent in teaching truth by the power of Almighty God, and thus we can forge the most powerful of all weapons against the vicious doctrines of Satan.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was asked how he governed the Church members in his day. His answer in one sentence was, "Teach them correct principles and they will govern themselves."

If we overemphasize the philosophies of the enemies of righteousness instead of teaching forcefully the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, such overemphasis can only serve to stir up controversy and strife and thus defeat the very purpose of our missionary work in all the nations of the world.

The voice of the people

Now a third certainty:

Those who have served as public officials soon learn that there is always the imperative necessity of deciding whether or not demands on a controversial issue are being made by a well-organized loud minority or by a greater majority of those who might be less vocal but whose cause is just and in accordance with righteous principles. Always we would do well to reflect upon the counsel of a wise king of ancient times: "Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore . . . do your business by the voice of the people." (Mosiah 29:26.)

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Let this counsel of that wise ancient king be our counsel to our Church members and the honorable of the earth everywhere. Be alert and active in your business and political interests. The great danger in any society is apathy and a failure to be alert to the issues of the day, when applied to principles or to the election of public officials.

Statesmanlike leaders

The fourth certainty to keep in mind in our civic responsibilities is to choose those to govern us as "civil officers and magistrates [who will] enforce the laws . . . and . . . administer the law in equity and justice" (D&C 134:3), as we are admonished by inspired men of God.

In a word, we must seek for statesmanlike men who will ask, "Is it right and is it good for the country or the community?" instead of those who may merely ask, "Is it politically expedient?"

Remember always *our* declaration of political faith: "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law." (Article of Faith 12.)

Wherever you are, wherever you live, pray for the leaders of your country, for remember that they too hold in their hands all that you hold dear. Again I repeat the Lord's injunction: ". . . be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet." (D&C 58:22.)

God's eternal plan

And now, finally, the supreme of all certainties is God's eternal plan as given in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Here we have given us the never-failing principles that will keep our feet firmly planted on the path of safety. By these eternal principles we can readily detect truth from error. In the earliest revelations of our dispensation we were told that the gospel

teachings were given that "inasmuch as they have erred it might be made known; And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed." (D&C 1:25-26.)

By the light of gospel truths we can be shown that "every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ . . . ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God." (Moro. 7:16.)

But also we may know that "whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil" (Moro. 7:17), whether it be labeled religion, philosophy, science, or political dogma.

Trust in God

What a wonderful feeling of security can come in a crisis to one who has learned to pray and has cultivated listening ears so that he can "call, and the Lord shall answer"; when he can cry and the Lord shall say, "Here I am." (Isa. 58:9.)

The supreme commander of the Allied forces during World War II, General Eisenhower, when faced with some of the most momentous military decisions that were to change the course of the world, made his humble acknowledgment: "This is what I found out about religion: It gives you courage to make the decisions you must make in a crisis and then the confidence to leave the result to a Higher Power. Only by trust in God can a man carrying responsibilities find repose."

There you have it, all you who are leaders in high places, in business, in government, or in the Church, or for that matter in any walk of life: the constant reminder that God is in his heaven and all can be right with the world, if we seek for him and find him, "though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; . . . For we are also his offspring." (Acts 17:27-28.)

Personal witness

Now, may I in all humility bear my own witness to the power of these guidelines in my life. I have learned by my own experience that the heavier the responsibilities, the greater is my dependence on the Lord.

In some measure I begin to understand the import of the declaration of Moses, who, after his great spiritual experience, said: "Now . . . I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed." (Moses 1:10.)

But through the lights and shadows of my life, I also have the assurance that aided by God's holy power, doubts can be resolved into certainties, burdens can be lightened, and a literal rebirth can be realized as the nearness to my Lord and Master becomes more certain—to all of which I bear humble

witness in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. □

Following President Lee's remarks, the Choir sang "King of Glory, King of Peace" without announcement.

President N. Eldon Tanner

We have just heard a most powerful address by President Harold B. Lee, first counselor in the First Presidency, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "King of Glory, King of Peace."

Many on television and radio have just tuned in on this conference, and we wish to extend to them a cordial welcome.

Elder Marion D. Hanks, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us.

Elder Marion D. Hanks

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

I am honored to be able to express my convictions and offer my testimony this morning.

I would like to talk about happiness.

Reasons for unhappiness

On my desk at this moment is the cover of a leading news journal with this headline: "Good Times—But People Are Unhappy."

The story within reported the results of a survey made to determine why people are unhappy in good times. The reasons given are substantially the same as those produced by any responsible inquiry: lack of meaning or purpose in life, anxiety, fear, poor self-image, doubting one's capacity to love or worthiness to be loved, not accomplishing anything, bad conscience, inability to form lasting relationships, unsatisfactory home life, loneliness, no sense of belonging, little giving of

self, and the summation of them all: *lack of life-directing relationships with God and Christ.*

In considering this, I remembered the day some time ago when I stood before a bulletin board in the Student Union Building on an Arizona university campus, where I had been invited to speak to a convocation during their "Religion in Life Week." On my way into the auditorium, thinking of the implications of their theme, which was "Something Missing," my attention was drawn to a short advertising notice, posted and signed by a student in the lobby. Line by line it read:

For Sale
1929 Ford
Two-Door Sedan
Nice Body and Fenders
New Paint Job
No Engine
\$20.00
See Bob