

His sacrifice and his glory assure that "the spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time" (Alma 11:43).

Gratefully and positively, I affirm that there is life after life, first in the spirit world and then in the Resurrection, for each and every one of us. I know that God lives and that Jesus the Christ is his Son. He is "the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25). He lives. He is my Master. I am his servant. With all my heart, I love him, and I testify of him, in his holy name—the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Upon the signal of Brother Bowden, the chorus and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God," following which Elder William Grant Bangarter, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will speak.

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The chorus and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

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## Elder William Grant Bangarter

### What it means to be a saint

I would like to speak about what it means to be a saint. Some people call us Mormons. Some call us a sect or a cult. We call ourselves Saints. What do these designations signify?

A Mormon could be any kind of a person who has membership in the Church.

A sect is a body of persons following certain principles or doctrines. The earliest followers of the Savior were called a sect.

A cult is described as a particular system of religious worship having a fixed veneration for a person.

A saint is one who follows Christ in holiness and devotion with a view fixed on *eternal* life.

With proper understanding, there is nothing wrong with any of these designations. When they are used to imply ridicule and slander, they can all be offensive.

### What really matters

Many members of the Church become upset when those terms are used by name-callers. Calling people names to ridicule them or to offend them is an

old, childish practice. Children respond by chanting with some truth: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me."

It isn't very important what impolite people call this church and its people. Name-calling has been an age-old pastime among people who profess to be religious. The words *heretic*, *blasphemer*, *bigot*, *hypocrite*, and *heathen* have all had their day.

What really matters is what we ourselves believe, what we do, and most important, what we are. "Are you a born-again Christian?" Well, in the sense that some others think of it, perhaps not—that is, if the phrase means something like to have "confessed Christ" as the only requirement for salvation. On the other hand, if this question is considered in a literal and doctrinal sense, we might reflect on a positive answer.

### Act accordingly

Brother Carmen Bria, a neighbor of ours converted from another church, was assisting prisoners as a social worker. A certain young prisoner became interested in the gospel. His

father, a minister from another church, visited the boy and was very upset that his son was studying Mormon doctrine, even more than he was by the fact that his son was in prison.

Brother Bria approached the father and asked why he was so distressed. The father replied, "You are not saved."

"Why do you say that?" asked Brother Bria.

"Well," said the father, "you have not taken Christ as your personal Savior. You have not been born again in Christ."

Brother Bria responded, "Sir, let me explain it to you. We may not say it just the way you do, but we most certainly do believe in a literal salvation through Jesus Christ. We *have* accepted him as our personal Savior, have taken upon us his name, and we have been born again in Christ."

As Paul said: "Therefore we are buried with him by *baptism* into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4; italics added).

Members of the Church should know that they are born again—"redeemed of God," as the Prophet Alma said, "[to] be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:9).

King Benjamin said: "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7).

If, then, we understand that we are born again, having taken upon us the name of Christ, the big question is, do we act like it?

A saint is one who follows Christ in holiness and devotion. This is the commitment of a Latter-day Saint.

## Strive for perfection

Another question: Are we perfect? As a response to that question, I repeat a story about the speaker who said to his congregation, "If there is anyone here who is perfect, will he please stand." One man stood, and the speaker inquired, "Sir, do you really believe that you are perfect?"

The man responded, "Oh, no. I am not standing for myself. I stand as proxy for my wife's first husband."

Few members of the Church would claim to be perfect, although it should always be our goal. What we do is to strive with faith and devotion onward toward perfection in order to obtain eternal life.

There are many ways to be imperfect. After a long sermon of admonition, King Benjamin said: "I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

"But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not *watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith* of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not" (Mosiah 4:29–30, italics added).

The many imperfections which trouble our daily lives require us to be a repenting as well as a repentant people. We should pay attention to the gentle admonitions as well as the thundering warnings.

At the conclusion of the October 1975 general conference, President Spencer W. Kimball said: "While sitting here, I have made up my mind that when I go home from this conference this night there are many, many areas in my life that I can perfect. I have made a mental list of them, and I expect to go to work as soon as we get through with conference" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, p. 164; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 111).

### God has established conditions for us to return to his presence

So this mortal part of our eternal life is a time of probation. We desired the experience before we were born. Now we are in the midst of the great test. "And we will prove them herewith," said the Lord, "to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abraham 3:25).

Great numbers of the Saints throughout the world are doing very well. They take their probation seriously. They have established happy, righteous homes. Children grow up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Enos 1:1). Their theme song is "Love at Home." Home evenings, love for the scriptures, association in meetings with their brothers and sisters, payment of their tithes, plans for education and missionary service are the direction of their efforts with their faces steadfastly turned toward the temple.

This is far different from "confessing Christ" as the one single requirement for salvation. *Saints* take literally the parable in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew about the Judgment Day (see vs. 31-46). They reach out to one another and to the poor and distressed. Thus, they may be found on the right hand of God. No matter who you are and what you may think, God has established certain conditions or requirements to return to his presence. "They who keep their first estate shall be added upon; . . . and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (Abraham 3:26).

### Ordinances and covenants of the gospel

Saints go beyond the required righteous living to enter into the covenants and receive the ordinances of the gospel. These are taught and administered through his authorized servants by the power of the holy priesthood. *Holy* priesthood is not man-made. The ordinances and covenants belong to *this*

priesthood. Beyond baptism, without which the Lord said we "cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5), are further gifts and blessings which are received in the temple. There we enter into solemn covenants with God. Through the priesthood we receive the ordinances which direct us toward the veil, that we may enter again into his presence.

Now, of course the ordinances alone do not make us saints. Our actions do that, but even saints have not the power to return to God's presence without Christ's infinite atonement. That is why we enter into the covenants.

### We are only stewards

In this second estate, is our perspective short-range or is it eternal? Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, drew this to our attention in 1968: "One day," he said, "a friend took me to his ranch. He unlocked the door of a large new automobile, slid under the wheel, and said proudly, 'How do you like my new car?' We rode in luxurious comfort . . . to a beautiful new landscaped home, and he said with no little pride, 'This is my home.'

"He drove to a grassy knoll. The sun was retiring behind the distant hills. He surveyed his vast domain. . . .

" . . . With a wide sweeping gesture, he boasted, 'From the clump of trees, to the lake, to the bluff, and to the ranch buildings and all between—all this is mine. . . .'

" . . . I saw him lying in his death," said President Kimball, "among luxurious furnishings in a palatial home. It had been a vast estate. . . . I spoke at his funeral, and I followed the cortege . . . to his grave, a tiny, oblong area the length of a tall man, the width of a heavy one.

"Yesterday I saw that same estate, yellow in grain, green in lucerne, white in cotton, seemingly unmindful of him who had claimed it" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1968, pp. 73-74;

or *Improvement Era*, June 1968, pp. 81-82).

The earth is the Lord's. We are only stewards.

### Take priesthood ordinances seriously

Some who have made the covenant do not take it seriously. Having received baptism as a form and not as a covenant, they scarcely advance to the sacrament table. Saints will take it seriously. The ordinances of the priesthood and the covenants entered into in the temple direct us toward the consecrated life God expects of those who have taken the name of Jesus Christ.

Speaking in Logan in 1984, President Ezra Taft Benson taught that Adam and his posterity were commanded "to enter into the order of the Son of God. To enter into the order of the Son of God," he said, "is the equivalent today of entering into the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which is only received in the

house of the Lord" (*Ensign*, Aug. 1985, p. 8).

"For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live" (D&C 84:22).

That the Saints will accept this priesthood, receive its ordinances, and keep the covenants, I pray through Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" without announcement.

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### President Monson

Elder William Grant Bangerter, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has addressed us, followed by that matchless rendition of "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" as performed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing under the baton of Robert Bowden.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Reexamine life's priorities

My dear brothers and sisters, since last general conference, I have felt in my own life the power of priesthood blessings and the power of the faith and prayers of Church members. For many years, I have given blessings to others. I have fasted and prayed for their well-being and have exercised my faith for their recovery. Recently, during a serious illness, I was the recipient of such faith, prayers, and blessings. I thank you, brothers and sisters, for the prayers that you have offered in my behalf.

One of my colleagues said to me that some good would come from this illness. He suggested that it is good, on occasion, for everyone to face adversity, especially if it causes intro-

spection that enables us to openly and honestly assess our lives. That is what I did.

The night before my surgery, my doctors talked about the possibility of cancer. When I was left alone, my mind filled with thoughts of my family and of my ministry. I found comfort in the ordinances of the gospel that bind me to my family if we are faithful. I realized that I needed to rearrange some of my priorities to accomplish the things that matter most to me.

Sometimes we need a personal crisis to reinforce in our minds what we really value and cherish. The scriptures are filled with examples of people facing crises before learning how to better serve God and others. Perhaps if you, too, search your hearts and coura-