

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:26.
2. 2 Nephi 2:27.
3. “Know This, That Every Soul Is Free,” *Hymns*, no. 240.
4. Alma 42:15.
5. Moses 4:1.
6. Moses 4:2.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:36.
8. Moses 4:3.
9. 2 Nephi 2:27; see also 2 Nephi 9:9.
10. Luke 2:49.
11. 3 Nephi 27:13.
12. Luke 22:42–43.
13. Luke 23:34.
14. Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.
15. John 19:30.
16. Hebrews 4:15.
17. 2 Nephi 28:8.
18. 2 Nephi 2:11.
19. Alma 30:17.
20. 2 Nephi 2:12.
21. 1 Samuel 15:1, 3.
22. 1 Samuel 15:13.
23. 1 Samuel 15:14.
24. 1 Samuel 15:22.
25. 1 Samuel 15:24.
26. Romans 3:23.
27. Articles of Faith 1:3.
28. John 17:24.
29. John 17:3.
30. Mosiah 27:31.

Elder Quentin L. Cook

Preserving freedom and light

I celebrated a birthday last month. For my birthday present, my wife, Mary, gave me a CD containing songs of hope and faith performed by a famous British singer named Vera Lynn, who inspired her listeners during the dark days of the Second World War.

There is a little history as to why my wife would give me this gift. The bombing of London in September 1940 commenced the day before I was born.¹ My mother, listening to the account of the London Blitz on the radio in her hospital room, decided to name me after the radio announcer, whose first name was Quentin.

The vocalist Vera Lynn is now 93 years old. Last year some of her wartime songs were rereleased and immediately climbed to the top of the music charts in Britain. Those of you who are a little older will remember some of the songs like “The White Cliffs of Dover.”

One song, titled “When the Lights Go on Again (All over the World),” deeply touched me. The song brought two thoughts to my mind—first, the prophetic words by

a British statesman: “The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime”;² and second, the bombing raids conducted over British cities like London. To make it harder for the attacking bombers to find a target, black-outs were instituted. Lights were turned out, and windows were draped.

The song reflected an optimistic hope that freedom and light would be restored. For those of us who understand the role of the Savior and the Light of Christ³ in the ongoing conflict between good and evil, the analogy between that world war and the moral conflict today is clear. It is by the Light of Christ that all mankind “may know good from evil.”⁴

Freedom and light have never been easy to attain or maintain. Since the War in Heaven, the forces of evil have used every means possible to destroy agency and extinguish light. The assault on moral principles and religious freedom has never been stronger.

As Latter-day Saints, we need to do our best to preserve light and protect our families and communities from this assault on morality and religious freedom.

Protecting family

An ever-present danger to the family is the onslaught of evil forces that seem to come from every direction. While our primary effort must be to seek light and truth, we would be wise to black out from our homes the lethal bombs that destroy spiritual development and growth. Pornography, in particular, is a weapon of mass moral destruction. Its impact is at the forefront in eroding moral values. Some TV programs and Internet sites are equally lethal. These evil forces remove light and hope from the world. The level of decadence is accelerating.⁵ If we do not black out evil from our homes and lives, do not be surprised if devastating moral explosions shatter the peace which is the reward for righteous living. Our responsibility is to be in the world but not of the world.

In addition, we need to greatly increase religious observance in the home. Weekly family home evening and daily family prayer and scripture study are essential. We need to introduce into our homes content that is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy.”⁶ If we make of our homes holy places that shelter us from evil, we will be protected from the adverse consequences that the scriptures have foretold.

Protecting community

In addition to protecting our own families, we should be a source of light in protecting our communities. The Savior said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”⁷

Our day has been described as “a time of plenty and an age of doubt.”⁸ Basic belief in the power and authority of God is not only questioned but also denigrated. How under these circumstances can we promote values in a way that will resonate with the nonbelievers and the apathetic and help abate the spiraling descent into violence and evil?

This question is of monumental importance. Think of the prophet Mormon and his anguish when he declared, “How could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!”⁹ Mormon’s anguish was justified, and his son, Moroni, was left to describe “the sad tale of the destruction of [his] people.”¹⁰

My personal experience of living and interacting with people all over the world has caused me to be optimistic. I believe that light and truth will be preserved in our time. In all nations there are large numbers who worship God and feel accountable to Him for their conduct. Some observers believe there is actually a global revival of faith.¹¹ As Church leaders, we have met with leaders of other faiths and have found that there is a common moral foundation that transcends theological differences and unites us in our aspirations for a better society.

We also find the majority of people are still respectful of basic moral values. But make no mistake: there are also people who are determined to both destroy faith and reject any religious influence in society. Other evil people exploit, manipulate, and tear down society with drugs, pornography, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, robbery, and dishonest business practices. The power and influence of these people is very large, even if they are relatively small in number.

There has always been an ongoing battle between people of faith and those who would purge religion and God from public life.¹² Many opinion leaders today reject a moral view of the world based on Judeo-Christian values. In their view there is no objective moral order.¹³ They believe no preference should be given to moral goals.¹⁴

Still, the majority of people aspire to be good and honorable. The Light of Christ, which is distinct from the Holy Ghost, informs their conscience. We know from the scriptures that the Light of Christ is “the Spirit [which] giveth light to every

man that cometh into the world.”¹⁵ This light is given “for the sake of the whole world.”¹⁶ President Boyd K. Packer has taught that this is a “source of inspiration, which each of us possesses in common with all other members of the human family.”¹⁷ This is why many will accept moral values even when founded on religious convictions which they do not personally support. As we read in Mosiah in the Book of Mormon, “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.” Mosiah then warns, “If the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come.”¹⁸

In our increasingly unrighteous world, it is essential that values based on religious belief be part of the public discourse. Moral positions informed by a religious conscience must be accorded equal access to the public square. Under the constitutions of most countries, a religious conscience may not be given preference, but neither should it be disregarded.¹⁹

Religious faith is a store of light, knowledge, and wisdom and benefits society in a dramatic way when adherents engage in moral conduct because they feel accountable to God.²⁰

Two religious principles will illustrate this point.

Honest conduct motivated by accountability to God

The thirteenth article of faith begins, “We believe in being honest.” Honesty is a principle founded in religious belief and is one of God’s basic laws.

Many years ago when I was practicing law in California, a friend and client who was not a member of our faith came in to see me and with great enthusiasm showed me a letter he had received from an LDS bishop of a nearby ward. The bishop wrote

that a member of his congregation, a former employee of my client, had taken materials from my client’s work site and had rationalized that they were surplus. But after becoming a committed Latter-day Saint and attempting to follow Jesus Christ, this employee recognized that what he had done was dishonest. Enclosed in the letter was a sum of money from the man to cover not only the cost of the materials but also interest. My client was impressed that the Church through lay leadership would assist this man in his effort to be reconciled to God.

Think about the light and truth that the shared value of honesty has in the Judeo-Christian world. Think about the impact on society if youth didn’t cheat in school, if adults were honest in the workplace and were faithful to their marriage vows. For us the concept of basic honesty is grounded in the life and teachings of the Savior. Honesty is also a valued attribute in many other faiths and in historic literature. The poet Robert Burns said, “An honest man’s the noblest work of God.”²¹ In almost every instance, people of faith feel accountable to God for being honest. This was the reason the man in California was repenting from his earlier act of dishonesty.

In a commencement address last year, Clayton Christensen, a Harvard professor and Church leader, shared the true account of a professional colleague from another country who had studied democracy. This friend was surprised at how critically important religion is to democracy. He pointed out that in societies where the citizens are taught from a young age to feel accountable to God for honesty and integrity, they will abide by rules and practices that, while unenforceable, promote democratic ideals. In societies where this is not true, there cannot be enough policemen to enforce honest behavior.²²

Clearly, moral values with respect to honesty can play a significant role in establishing light and truth and improving

society and should be valued by those who do not have faith.

Treating all of God's children as brothers and sisters

A second example of how religious faith benefits society and contributes light to the world is the role of religion in treating all of God's children as brothers and sisters.

Many faith-based institutions in the last two centuries have been at the forefront in reaching out and rescuing those subjected to cruel circumstances, because their members believe that all men are made in the image and likeness of God.²³ William Wilberforce, the great British statesman who was instrumental in outlawing the slave trade in Great Britain, is an excellent example.²⁴ "Amazing Grace," the touching hymn, and the inspiring movie of the same name capture the feeling of the early 1800s and describe the account of his heroic effort. Wilberforce's untiring efforts were among the first steps in eliminating this terrible, oppressive, cruel, and venal practice. As part of that effort he, together with other leaders, set out to reform public morality. He believed that education and government had to be morally based.²⁵ "His . . . vision of moral and spiritual enrichment was what he lived for, whether in defending the institution of marriage, attacking the practices of the slave trade or emphatically defending the Sabbath day."²⁶ With great energy he helped mobilize the country's moral and social leaders in a nationwide struggle against vice.²⁷

In our early Church history, the vast majority of our members were opposed to slavery.²⁸ This was a significant reason, along with their religious beliefs, for the hostility and mob violence they experienced, culminating in the extermination order issued by Governor Boggs in Missouri.²⁹ In 1833 Joseph Smith received a revelation stating, "It is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another."³⁰ Our commitment to freedom of religion and treating

all people as sons and daughters of God is central to our doctrine.

These are just two examples of how faith-based values undergird principles that greatly bless society. There are many more. We should both participate ourselves and support people of character and integrity to help reestablish moral values that will bless the entire community.

Let me be clear that all voices need to be heard in the public square. Neither religious nor secular voices should be silenced. Furthermore, we should not expect that because some of our views emanate from religious principles, they will automatically be accepted or given preferential status. But it is also clear such views and values are entitled to be reviewed on their merits.

The moral foundation of our doctrine can be a beacon light to the world and can be a unifying force for both morality and faith in Jesus Christ. We need to protect our families and be at the forefront together with all people of goodwill in doing everything we can to preserve light, hope, and morality in our communities.

If we both live and proclaim these principles, we will be following Jesus Christ, who is the true Light of the World. We can be a force for righteousness in preparing for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We look forward to that beautiful day when "free hearts will sing, when the lights go on again all over the world."³¹ In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Richard Hough and Denis Richards, *The Battle of Britain: The Greatest Air Battle of World War II* (1989), 264.
2. Attributed to Sir Edward Grey, in Elizabeth M. Knowles, comp., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 5th ed. (1999), 353.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:11–13. The Light of Christ is "the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all

- things are governed” (verse 13). For a comprehensive understanding of the Light of Christ and the difference between the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost, see Boyd K. Packer, “The Light of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2005, 8–14.
4. Moroni 7:19.
 5. See Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (2000), 798.
 6. Articles of Faith 1:13.
 7. Matthew 5:16.
 8. Roger B. Porter, “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God” (talk given at Cambridge University Ward, Cambridge Massachusetts Stake, Sept. 13, 2009).
 9. Mormon 6:17.
 10. Mormon 8:3.
 11. See John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *God Is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith Is Changing the World* (2009).
 12. See Diana Butler Bass, “Peace, Love and Understanding” (review of *God Is Back*, by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge), *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, July 27–Aug. 2, 2009, 39.
 13. See David D. Kirkpatrick, “The Right Hand of the Fathers,” *New York Times Magazine*, Dec. 20, 2009, 27.
 14. See Kirkpatrick, “The Right Hand of the Fathers,” 27. Robert P. George teaches that either we have moral reason and free choice or we have amorality and determinism.
 15. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
 16. Doctrine and Covenants 84:48.
 17. Boyd K. Packer, “The Light of Christ,” 8.
 18. Mosiah 29:26–27.
 19. See Margaret Somerville, “Should Religion Influence Policy?” www.themarknews.com/articles/1535should-religion-influence-policy.
 20. See Zhao Xiao, “Market Economies with Churches and Market Economies without Churches,” 2002, www.danwei.org/business/churches_and_the_market_econom.php. This Chinese government economist argues that a moral underpinning is necessary to prevent people from lying and injuring others.
 21. “The Cotter’s Saturday Night,” in *Poems by Robert Burns* (1811), 191.
 22. See Clayton M. Christensen, “The Importance of Asking the Right Questions” (commencement speech, Southern New Hampshire University, Manchester, N.H., May 16, 2009).
 23. See Genesis 1:26.
 24. See William Hague, *William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner* (2007), 352–56.
 25. See Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 104–5.
 26. Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 513.
 27. See Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 107–8.
 28. See James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (1992), 93, 120, 202.
 29. See Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (1992), 48–51; see also Clyde A. Milner and others, *The Oxford History of the American West* (1994), 362: “Proslavery settlers and politicians persecuted them mercilessly.”
 30. Doctrine and Covenants 101:79.
 31. Final line in the song “When the Lights Go On Again (All over the World).”

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

Choose faith

We live in one of the greatest dispensations of all times—a time former prophets looked forward to, prophesied of, and, I believe, yearned for. However, with all

the heavenly blessings bestowed upon us, Satan, ever so real, is ever so active, and conflicting messages are continually bombarding all of us. The angel Moroni warned the young Prophet Joseph Smith that his name would be known for good