

By A Thread

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DEDICATION

To all the men and women on their watchtowers who are fighting the good fight.

D&C 123:7 It is an imperative duty that we owe to God, to angels, with whom we shall be brought to stand, and also to ourselves, to our wives and children, who have been made to bow down with grief, sorrow, and care, under the most damning hand of murder, tyranny, and oppression, supported and urged on and upheld by the influence of that spirit which hath so strongly riveted the creeds of the fathers, who have inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children, and filled the world with confusion, and has been growing stronger and stronger, and is now the very mainspring of all corruption, and the whole earth groans under the weight of its iniquity.

8 It is an iron yoke, it is a strong band; they are the very handcuffs, and chains, and shackles, and fetters of hell.

9 Therefore it is an imperative duty that we owe, not only to our own wives and children, but to the widows and fatherless, whose husbands and fathers have been murdered under its iron hand;

10 Which dark and blackening deeds are enough to make hell itself shudder, and to stand aghast and pale, and the hands of the very devil to tremble and palsy.

11 And also it is an imperative duty that we owe to all the rising generation, and to all the pure in heart—

12 For there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it—

13 Therefore, that we should waste and wear out our lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness, wherein we know them; and they are truly manifest from heaven—

14 These should then be attended to with great earnestness.

15 Let no man count them as small things; for there is much which lieth in futurity, pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things.

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FOREWORD

I first started looking into what ancient and modern prophets said about the principles of liberty, the US Constitution, and the threats we face in my early twenties. There were books like “Prophets, Principles, and National Survival” that did a great job compiling what Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints taught on these subjects up until David O. McKay. There were books compiling talks by President Benson on the principles of the Constitution such as, “An Enemy Hath Done This”, “God, Family, Country”, “So Shall Ye Reap”, “The Constitution: A Heavenly Banner”, “This Nation Shall Endure”, and “The Red Carpet” that I just could not get enough of and read at every opportunity. I immersed myself in every LDS General Conference talk, every Ensign article, and every BYU devotional on the topic of the Constitution from the perspective of the Restored Gospel.

As a part of this study, I wondered what the Lord expected of me. I knew that we are to be “doers of the word and not hearers only” as the Apostle James taught, but what? In the early 1960s, there was controversy over patriotic organizations and the Church’s stance on members’ involvement in them. Because of this controversy, President David O. McKay asked then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles Ezra Taft Benson to give a talk at Temple Square called, “Stand Up for Freedom,” where he said one of these groups was “the most effective non-church organization in the fight for freedom.” At that point in my life, I had never heard of the organization, but if Benson said it, it was good enough for me and not only did I become involved, I directed the activities of the organization for the west coast states for about a decade.

This helped me to develop not only my understanding, but my ability to effectively organize thousands of people to defend their

liberty, uncover plots like the North American Union, and remove wolves in sheep's clothing from their positions of power. During this time, I continued to study the words of the prophets, especially their words on how the Elders (among others) of Israel would take part in saving the principles of the Constitution when the time would come that it would "hang by a thread." I read everything I could get my hands on, which close associates of the prophet Joseph, his apostles, and even Eliza R. Snow witnessed. In Doctrine and Covenants section 11 verse 21, the Lord says:

"Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men."

When we understand what the Lord and His servants have said, it helps us better live the principles of the Gospel and have the Spirit in our lives. Seeking to apply these words to our lives and being "doers of the word," Enoch Moore and I founded Defending Utah as part of our effort not only to preserve liberty and stop modern-day Secret Combinations but do what we could to preserve the principles of the Constitution when the document itself seemed to "hang by a thread" and build the Kingdom of God as prophesied by Daniel.

I am grateful to Marc Martinez and his effort to bring this understanding to you and as many others as will read these words. I could have saved uncounted hours if I had read "By A Thread" when I was first starting my journey.

In his book, "By A Thread," Brother Martinez breaks down into concise topical chapters that help the reader not only easily find information needed to help bring understanding to others, but also to correct things we all learned in government schools. The situation we

find ourselves in makes it necessary for Brother Martinez to cover what many will find uncomfortable, but if left out would be a serious disservice to the reader. This took great courage on his part and readers would do well to take seriously and ponder these difficult truths.

Ezra Taft Benson once warned of seven lies that Lucifer tells us to not be actively engaged in the fight for freedom that allowed us to get a body in the first place. In his timeless talk, “Not Commanded in All Things,” General Conference of April 1965, one of these lies Benson mentioned is:

“‘Don’t worry,’ says the devil, ‘the Lord will protect you, and besides the world is so corrupt and heading toward destruction at such a pace that you can’t stop it, so why try?’”

Benson also pointed out:

“But the Book of Mormon warns us that when we should see these murderous conspiracies in our midst that we should awake to our awful situation. Now, why should we awake if the Lord is going to take care of us anyway?”

Brother Martinez stands faithfully in this work in building understanding not only of truths but of our duty regarding these truths. You will be better off for reading it, applying it, and sharing it with others.

Ben McClintock,
DefendingUtah.org

PREFACE

A friend of mine once quipped, “There are two ways to rebel against society: Take a steaming, fetid dump all over what everyone else holds sacrosanct, or alternatively, treat as sacrosanct what everyone else pays lip service to. The first is a time-honored rite of adolescence. The second will get you cast out and possibly killed.” This book has the potential to do both as it will mean something different to different people. It will illuminate and edify some people, while at the same time, offend and anger other people.

I really wanted to write a Sci fi novel, though. Well, I think what I wanted to write was a space opera with an antihero as the main protagonist who’s just trying to survive in a galaxy that is hell-bent on chewing him up and spitting him out a black hole. Then I started thinking about how dystopian society has to become to change good people or at least people who think that they’re good. I have observed how easily people are manipulated. It’s easier to fool a person than to convince him that he’s been fooled, at least according to Mark Twain.

I also thought about George Orwell’s classic novel, *1984*. I began to wonder what kinds of societies give rise to such totalitarian governments as his fictional INGSOC and how many years, if not decades or even centuries typically pass before a fledgling society becomes a corrupt and/or depraved civilization that ultimately collapses and becomes extinct. Luke Kemp, a social scientist, analyzed dozens of civilizations to find out that the average lifespan was less than 340 years. The Qin Dynasty lasted only 14 years while the Olmec Empire lasted a millennium. Venezuela was founded in 1811 and gained full independence in 1830. But where it was once the richest country in South America, it has within the last decade experienced an economic collapse and it is spiraling downward in a major crisis.

The United States has been experiencing its share of decadence, corruption, and despotism. President John F. Kennedy once said:

The very word '*secrecy*' is repugnant in a free and open society; and we are as a people inherently and historically opposed to secret societies, to *secret oaths* and to *secret proceedings*...we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy that relies primarily on covert means for expanding its sphere of influence—on infiltration instead of invasion, on subversion instead of elections, on intimidation instead of free choice, on guerrillas by night instead of armies by day. It is a system which has conscripted vast human and material resources into the building of a tightly knit, highly efficient machine that *combines* military, diplomatic, intelligence, economic, scientific and political operations...

No President should fear public scrutiny of his program. For from that scrutiny comes understanding; and from that understanding comes support or opposition. And both are necessary. I am not asking your newspapers to support the Administration, but I am asking your help in the tremendous task of informing and alerting the American people. For I have complete confidence in the response and dedication of our citizens whenever they are fully informed...

Without debate, without criticism, no Administration and no country can succeed—and no republic can survive. That is why the Athenian lawmaker Solon decreed it a crime for any citizen to shrink from

controversy. And that is why our press was protected by the First Amendment—the only business in America specifically protected by the Constitution—not primarily to amuse and entertain, not to emphasize the trivial and the sentimental, not to simply “give the public what it wants”—but to inform, to arouse, to reflect, to state our dangers and our opportunities, to indicate our crises and our choices, to lead, mold, educate and sometimes even anger public opinion...

And so it is to the printing press—to the recorder of man’s deeds, the keeper of his conscience, the courier of his news—that we look for strength and assistance, confident that with your help man will be what he was born to be: free and independent.¹

We, in America, have been warned before by people who once occupied this land, centuries before such secret societies—local, national, and global—would combine to usurp power over people. Today we are experiencing, by subtle degrees, that prophetic warning by someone whose own civilization had collapsed as the result of such “secret combinations.”

13 And it came to pass that Akish gathered in unto the house of Jared all his kinsfolk, and said unto them: Will ye swear unto me that ye will be faithful unto me in the thing which I shall desire of you?

14 And it came to pass that they all sware unto him, by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens, and also by the earth, and by their heads, that whoso should vary from the assistance which Akish desired should lose his head; and whoso should divulge whatsoever thing Akish made known unto them, the

same should lose his life.

15 And it came to pass that thus they did agree with Akish. And Akish did administer unto them the oaths which were given by them of old who also sought power, which had been handed down even from Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning.

16 And they were kept up by the power of the devil to administer these oaths unto the people, to keep them in darkness, to help such as sought power to gain power, and to murder, and to plunder, and to lie, and to commit all manner of wickedness and whoredoms...

18 And it came to pass that they formed a secret combination, even as they of old; which combination is most abominable and wicked above all, in the sight of God;

19 For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man.

20 And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites.

21 And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi.

22 And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood

of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not.

23 Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.

24 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; or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up.

25 For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning.

26 Wherefore, I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come

unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved
(Ether 8).

Today, the United States Constitution hangs, as it were, by a thread. My intention to write an escapist novel has turned into writing a series of essays to persuade all believers in Jesus Christ who love liberty to do as Moroni admonished. More specifically, it is a call to action for my fellow Latter-day Saint Elders to awaken to a sense of their awful situation, and to begin wasting and wearing out their lives to bring to light all the hidden things of darkness (D&C 123:13-15), to help save that inspired document, and to maintain their right to life, liberty, and their pursuit of happiness. Their freedom to accomplish an important work depends upon it.

These essays have been organized into the following chapters. I have so much more in my heart to express in this book, but to do so would have taken up volumes, which others have already masterfully written about in their own books over the last couple hundred years, some of which I will list at the end of this work. I hope the reader is interested in diving deeper into their subjects by reading those books as well. What I have written treats its subject matter in a way that I have not yet seen written in a single work, so I have taken the initiative to write it. I take sole responsibility for the contents of this book, including all mistakes. I am not educated beyond a high school diploma and freshman college in my youth. I am a simple layman who has written this book with my most honest intent according to my best ability. I consider it to be a good work. I hope it makes a difference in your life.

Note: Like the one above, many direct quotations in this book contain misspellings, grammatical errors, and/or archaic words because they were cited directly from original texts.

1. President John F. Kennedy, *Address Before the American Newspaper Publisher's Association*, April 27, 1961, emphasis added.

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CHAPTER 1

THE WHOLE OF AMERICA IS ZION

In 1979, Ezra Taft Benson declared in the October session of General Conference that this land—America—is a consecrated land decreed in the Book of Mormon as a choice land above all other lands and that whoever possesses it shall serve God or be swept off, “and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ...” (Ether 2:10-12).

Looking farther back into history, on April 8, 1844, during another conference, Joseph Smith, having worn out his lungs the day before while giving a discourse, stood up after the choir had sung a hymn, and said, “I want to make a proclamation to the Elders. You know very well that the Lord has led this Church by revelation. I have another revelation in relation to economy in the Church—a great, grand, and glorious revelation...You know there has been great discussion in relation to Zion—where it is, and where the gathering of the dispensation is, and which I am now going to tell you. The prophets have spoken and written upon it; but I will make a

proclamation that will cover a broader ground. The whole of America is Zion itself from north to south, and is described by the Prophets, who declare that it is the Zion where the mountain of the Lord should be, and that it should be in the center of the land. When Elders shall take up and examine the old prophecies in the Bible, they will see it.”¹

Questions have arisen in the intervening years whether Joseph meant both the North American and the South American continents, or if he meant the continental United States from its northern boundary to its southern boundary. Both William Clayton’s and Thomas Bullock’s reports of the April Conference seem to imply the continental U.S., while Willard Richards’ writings state, “the central part of N. & South America.”²

Although the fledgling United States of America cast off its shackles from English monarchical rule through the shedding of blood with its Declaration of Independence and the ratification of its Constitution, other American countries were still engaged in wars of independence to free themselves from European rule. The Holy Alliance of Russia, Prussia, and Austria supported France to assist Spain and Portugal to restore their monarchies in South America. This attempt appalled the British government and was repelled by a proclamation from the U.S. known as the Monroe Doctrine, which declared that “the occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition, which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.”³

Interventions in the politics of the Americas by foreign powers would therefore be considered hostile acts against the United States.

This verified the Lord's declaration and fulfilled the prophecy that this land would be a land of liberty to the Gentiles and that there would be no kings upon this land. "I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God. For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words." (2 Nephi 10:12-14).

The stage was set. The Lord's preparations provided a cradle of liberty for the labors necessary for the redemption of Zion. But it would not happen without opposition. Good laws do not guarantee good men. Joseph Smith and the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints endured persecutions with their attempts to build up God's kingdom on Earth. In 1833, they suffered at the hands of a mob of men in Missouri who were troubled by the growing number of Saints and who had destroyed church property, tarred and feathered two members, and demanded they leave Jackson County. The Lord then revealed His will to Joseph Smith, who at the time was in Kirtland, Ohio:

Verily I say unto you my friends, fear not, let your hearts be comforted; yea, rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks; Waiting patiently on the Lord, for your prayers have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded with this seal and testament—the Lord hath sworn and decreed that they shall be granted. Therefore, he giveth this promise unto you, with an immutable covenant that they shall be fulfilled; and all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory, saith the Lord. And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them. And that law of the land

which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me. Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land; And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil. I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free. Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil. And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God. For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith. And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal. Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy. For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me. Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children; And again, the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets, and the prophets unto the Jews; lest I come and smite the whole earth with a curse, and all flesh be consumed before me. (D&C 98:1-17).

The Saints were constantly afflicted by persecution after persecution, and their constitutional rights had been violated time and time again. But their duty was to suffer for Christ's sake, and in their long-suffering and afflictions even in the face of death, perform the work given to them. The United States Constitution, which the Lord had caused to be established, guaranteed them their privilege of doing the work necessary to redeem Zion. At the end of 1833, just three and a half short years after Joseph Smith had established the Lord's church, the Lord declared by revelation the following:

There is even now already in store sufficient, yea, even an abundance, to redeem Zion, and establish her waste places, no more to be thrown down, were the churches, who call themselves after my name, willing to hearken to my voice. And again I say unto you, those who have been scattered by their enemies, it is my will that they should continue to importune for redress, and redemption, by the hands of those who are placed as rulers and are in authority over you—According to the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established, and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles; That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment. Therefore, 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 very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood. (D&C 101:75-80).

Prior to that year, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith:

Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem. Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun., and others with whom the Lord was well pleased. Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation. For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house. (D&C 84:2-5).

Alexander Majors wrote in his memoirs concerning that temple lot, “Nothing of very great note occurred in the county of Jackson, after the cyclone of 1826, until the year 1830, when five Mormon elders made their appearance in the county and commenced preaching, stating to their audiences that...this is the spot of ground on which the New Jerusalem is to be built, and, when finished, Christ Jesus is to make his reappearance and dwell in this city of New Jerusalem with the saints for a thousand years, at the end of which time there will be a new deal with reference to the nations of the earth, and the final wind-up of the career of the human family.”⁴

The Latter-day Saints were never able to begin building the Lord's temple due to the persecutions they endured, and also because of their expulsion from Jackson County in 1833 as well as from the state of Missouri in 1839. To this day, no such temple has been built on that lot, nor has Zion been redeemed. The Saints suffered repetitive persecutions by their fellow Americans who ignored their constitutional rights to peaceably assemble and to worship God according to their consciences. Joseph Smith declared after having sought redress from the President of the United States:

It is one of the first principles of my life, and one that I have cultivated from childhood, having been taught it by my father, to allow everyone the liberty of conscience. I am the greatest advocate of the Constitution of the United States there is on earth. In my feelings I am always ready to die for the protection of the weak and oppressed in their just rights. The only fault I find with the Constitution is, it is not broad enough to cover the whole ground.

Although it provides that all men shall enjoy religious freedom, yet it does not provide the manner by which that freedom can be preserved, nor for the punishment of Government officers who refuse to protect the people in their religious rights or punish those mobs, states, or communities who interfere with the rights of the people on account of their religion. Its sentiments are good, but it provides no means of enforcing them. It has but this one fault. Under its provision, a man or a people who are able to protect themselves can get along well enough; but those who have the misfortune to be weak or unpopular are left to the merciless rage of popular fury.

The Constitution should contain a provision that every officer of the Government who should neglect or refuse to extend the protection guaranteed in the Constitution should be subject to capital punishment; and then the president of the United States would not say, “*Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you,*” a governor issue exterminating orders, or judges say, “The men ought to have the protection of the law, but it won’t please the mob; the men must die, anyhow, to satisfy the clamor of the rabble; they must be hung, or Missouri be damned to all eternity.” Executive writs could be issued when they ought to be, and not be made instruments of cruelty to oppress the innocent, and persecute men whose religion is unpopular.⁵

On November 1, 1838, Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, and others were rounded up by Major-General Samuel D. Lucas and taken to Far West to allow them to pick up clothes and some supplies for their imprisonment. At Joseph’s home, a guard stood present while Joseph’s wife Emma and his children clung to him, crying. One guard pushed Joseph’s son—not quite six years old yet—aside with his sword and said, “God damn you, get away you little rascal or I will run you through.”⁶

They were then loaded onto a wagon accompanied by a militia of three hundred men, commanded by Brigadier General Moses Wilson, and brought into a camp where the officers held a court-martial. Joseph and the others were sentenced to be shot the following morning on the public square of Far West as a warning to the “Mormons.” Major-General Lucas had written a letter to Brigadier-General Doniphan ordering Doniphan to carry out the execution. Upon reading it, Brigadier-General Doniphan promptly replied to

Lucas with righteous indignation, refusing to carry out those orders, declaring it was cold-blooded murder. Doniphan also warned Lucas in his reply that if Lucas executed the men, he would hold him personally responsible before an earthly tribunal, “so help me God.” Joseph Smith had the opportunity to speak to General Wilson and asked, “why I was thus treated. I told him I was not aware of having done anything worthy of such treatment; that I had always been a supporter of the Constitution and of democracy. His answer was, ‘I know it, and that is the reason why I want to kill you, or have you killed.’”⁷

Between March 20 and 25, 1839, having been taken again, and also held “prisoner for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake” by the power of mobocracy under the exterminating reign of Governor Lilburn Williams Boggs, Joseph wrote a lengthy communication to the Saints in Quincy, Illinois and to the rest who were scattered abroad in which he concluded with the following:

Here is a principle also, which we are bound to be exercised with, that is, in common with all men, such as governments, and laws, and regulations in the civil concerns of life. This principle guarantees to all parties, sects, and denominations, and classes of religion, equal, coherent, and indefeasible rights; they are things that pertain to this life; therefore all are alike interested; they make our responsibilities one towards another in matters of corruptible things, while the former principles do not destroy the latter, but bind us stronger, and make our responsibilities not only one to another, but unto God also. Hence we say, that the Constitution of the United States is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God. It is a heavenly banner; it is to all those who are privileged with the sweets of its liberty, like the cooling shades

and refreshing waters of a great rock in a thirsty and weary land. It is like a great tree under whose branches men from every clime can be shielded from the burning rays of the sun.

We, brethren, are deprived of the protection of its glorious principles, by the cruelty of the cruel, by those who only look for the time being, for pasturage like the beasts of the field, only to fill themselves; and forget that the 'Mormons,' as well as the Presbyterians, and those of every other class and description, have equal rights to partake of the fruits of the great tree of our national liberty. But notwithstanding we see what we see, and feel what we feel, and know what we know, yet the fruit is no less precious and delicious to our taste; we cannot be weaned from milk, neither can we be driven from the breast; neither will we deny our religion because of the hand of oppression; but we will hold on until death.

We say that God is true; that the Constitution of the United States is true; that the Bible is true; that the Book of Mormon is true; that the Book of Covenants is true; that Christ is true; that the ministering angels sent forth from God are true, and that we know that we have an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, whose builder and maker is God; a consolation which our oppressors cannot feel, when fortune, or fate, shall lay its iron hand on them as it has on us. Now, we ask, what is man? Remember, brethren, that time and chance happen to all men. We shall continue our reflections in our next. We subscribe ourselves, your sincere friends and brethren

in the bonds of the everlasting Gospel, prisoners of Jesus Christ, for the sake fo the Gospel and the Saints. We pronounce the blessings of heaven upon the heads of the Saints who seek to serve God with undivided hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.⁸

On April 22, 1839, Joseph appealed to the people of the United States, saying:

I ask the citizens of this Republic whether such a state of things is to be suffered to pass unnoticed, and the hearts of widows, orphans, and patriots to be broken, and their wrongs left without redress? No! I invoke the genius of our Constitution. I appeal to the patriotism of Americans to stop this unlawful and unholy procedure; and pray that God may defend this nation from the dreadful effects of such outrages. Is there no virtue in the body politic? Will not the people rise up in their majesty, and with that promptitude and zeal which are so characteristic of them, discountenance such proceedings, by bringing the offenders to that punishment which they so richly deserve, and save the nation from that disgrace and ultimate ruin, which otherwise must inevitably fall upon it?⁹

Joseph also wrote a letter to William Phelps and others in which he said:

Be wise, let prudence dictate all your counsels, preserve peace with all men, if possible, stand by the Constitution of your country, observe its principles, and above all, show yourselves men of God, worthy

citizens and we doubt not, community ere long, will do you justice, and rise in indignation against those who are the instigators of your suffering and affliction.¹⁰

On May 18, 1843, while at Carthage, Joseph met with Judge Stephen A. Douglas who requested that Joseph recount the history of the Missouri persecutions, which Joseph then did for about three hours. He also gave a relation of his journey to Washington City and his application on behalf of the Saints to the President of the United States for redress. President Van Buren's cowardly reply was, "Gentlemen, your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you," and the cold, unfeeling manner in which he was treated by most of the senators and representatives in relation to the subject, [Henry] Clay saying, "You had better go to Oregon," and [John] Calhoun shaking his head solemnly, saying, "It's a nice question—a critical question, but it will not do to agitate it."¹¹

Judge Douglas listened intently and spoke in warm deprecation of the conduct of Governor Boggs and others in Missouri who took part in the extermination of the Saints there. He replied that anyone who would do as the mobs in Missouri had done to them ought to be brought to judgment and ought to be punished.

[Joseph] Smith, in concluding his remarks, said that if the government, which received into its coffers the money of citizens for its public lands, while its officials are rolling in luxury at the expense of its public treasury, cannot protect such citizens in their lives and property, it is an old granny anyhow; and I prophesy in the name of the Lord God of Israel, unless the United States redress the wrongs committed upon the Saints in the state of Missouri and punish the crimes committed by her officers that

in a few years the government will be utterly overthrown and wasted, and there will not be so much as a potsherd left, for their wickedness in permitting the murder of men, women and children, and the wholesale plunder and extermination of thousands of her citizens to go unpunished, thereby perpetrating a foul and corroding blot upon the fair fame of this great republic, the very thought of which would have caused the high-minded and patriotic framers of the Constitution of the United States to hide their faces with shame. Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if ever you turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of the Almighty upon you; and you will live to see and know that I have testified the truth to you; for the conversation of this day will stick to you through life.¹²

Judge Douglas did eventually aspire to become President of the United States. Seventeen years later, during the 1860 National Democratic Convention in Charleston, South Carolina, Douglas entered as the front-runner for the presidential nomination. He won by a great majority on the first ballot but failed to secure the required two-thirds majority to win the convention. Consequently, the convention held fifty-seven ballots in which Douglas easily won all of them, but he never secured the required majority. He was nicknamed the “Little Giant” due to his short height at five feet, four inches, but also because he was a forceful and dominant figure in politics, having also served as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois, House of Representatives member from Illinois’s fifth district, and United States Senator from Illinois. Missouri was the only state that Douglas carried. He lost to Abraham Lincoln who was inaugurated March 4, 1861, becoming the sixteenth president of the United States. Two months later, Douglas became very ill and,

soon after, died on June 3, 1861, at age forty-eight, coincidentally on the same day as the Battle of Philippi, the first skirmish of the American Civil War.

In 1843, the same year that Joseph had first met with Judge Douglas, Joseph had sent letters to John C. Calhoun, Lewis Cass, Richard Mentor Johnson, Henry Clay, and Martin Van Buren, who were the five prominent presidential candidates at the time, and he inquired of them regarding their plans for ending the persecutions suffered by the Saints in Missouri. John Calhoun, Lewis Cass, and leader of the Whig Party Henry Clay were the only three who replied to his letters, but the subterfuge in their replies indicated that they declined to commit any help to the Saints. Copies of these letters along with Joseph Smith's critical replies can be found in *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* by B.H. Roberts, pp. 373-388 and *Letter from Lewis Cass, 9 December 1843, The Joseph Smith Papers*, which can be found on the internet. It was evident that Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints would receive no help whatsoever from their elected representatives.

NOTES

1. Andrew F. Ehat & Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Grandin Book Company, 1991), pp. 362, 364, 365; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Deseret Book Company, 1976), p. 362.
2. Andrew F. Ehat & Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, (Grandin Book Company, 1991), p. 365.
3. *Monroe Doctrine*, December 2, 1823.
4. Alexander Majors, *Seventy Years on the Frontier: Alexander Majors' memoirs of a lifetime on the border*, ch. 4, p. 43.
5. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Deseret Book Company, 1976), pp. 326-327.
6. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), p. 368.
7. B.H. Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 3 (Deseret Book Company, 1978), p. 191.
8. B.H. Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 3 (Deseret Book Company, 1978), pp. 304-305.
9. B.H. Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 3 (Deseret Book Company, 1978), p. 332.
10. "Letter to William W. Phelps and Others," 25 July 1836, p. 359, *The Joseph Smith Papers*. "Public Meeting," *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, Aug. 1836, 2:359.
11. B.H. Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 5 (Deseret Book Company, 1978), p. 393.
12. B.H. Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 5 (Deseret Book Company, 1978), pp. 393-394.

CHAPTER 2

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY AND MARTYRDOM

Joseph Smith, frustrated, felt betrayed and ignored long enough. On January 29, 1844, he decided to become a candidate for the office of the President of the United States on an independent third party platform. On February 8, 1844, he explained:

I would not have suffered my name to have been used by my friends on any wise as President of the United States, or candidate for that office, if I and my friends could have had the privilege of enjoying our religious and civil rights as American citizens, even those rights which the Constitution guarantees unto all her citizens alike. But this as a people we have been denied from the beginning. Persecution has rolled upon our heads from time to time, from portions of the United States, like peals of thunder, because of our religion; and no portion of the Government as yet has stepped forward for our relief. And in view of these things, I feel it to be my right and privilege to

obtain what influence and power I can, lawfully, in the United States, for the protection of injured innocence; and if I lose my life in a good cause I am willing to be sacrificed on the altar of virtue, righteousness, and truth, in maintaining the laws and Constitution of the United States, if need be, for the general good of mankind.¹

The Latter-day Saints then formed a new political party, which they called The Reform Party. They held a nomination convention on May 17, which was attended by delegates from all twenty-six states and ten Illinois counties. The nomination of Joseph Smith, and Sidney Rigdon as his running mate, was uncontested, and a platform was adopted stating that the party would support Joseph for the presidency. For further reading, see *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, p. 20 and *History of the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 385-98.

In his presidential campaign platform, Joseph Smith proposed to end slavery through peaceful compensated emancipation as many other countries had already accomplished. He also proposed to reduce the size of Congress, re-establish a national bank, annex Texas, California, and Oregon, reform prisons, and authorize the federal government to protect the liberties of Latter-day Saints and other minorities. In his widely distributed published pamphlet, *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States*, Joseph endorsed adopting and welcoming those states previously mentioned, and also Mexico, Canada, and more if they so petitioned to be adopted into a family union. Joseph passionately cried freedom and justice for all. The concluding words in his pamphlet were:

And when a neighboring realm petitioned to join the union of the sons of liberty, my voice would be, *come*: yea come Texas: come Mexico; come Canada; and come all the world—let us be brethren: let us be

one great family; and let there be universal peace. Abolish the cruel custom of prisons, (except certain cases,) penitentiaries, and court-martials for desertion; and let reason and friendship reign over the ruins of ignorance and barbarity; yea I would, as the universal friend of man, open the prisons; open the eyes; open the ears and open the hearts of all people, to behold and enjoy freedom, unadulterated freedom: and God, who once cleansed the violence of the earth with a flood; whose Son laid down his life for the salvation of all his father gave him out of the world; and who has promised that he will come and purify the world again with fire in the last days, should be supplicated by me for the good of all people. With the highest esteem, I am a friend of virtue, and of the people,--
JOSEPH SMITH.

For further reading of the document transcript of this pamphlet by Joseph Smith, see *General Smith's Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States, 7 February 1844* in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, which can be found on the internet.

There have been debates regarding whether Joseph Smith as a third party candidate had a chance of winning. Meanwhile, he had been looking to the West to California, or Oregon for the sake of their safety. "All through the spring plans were made and information gathered. To survey the West, a party of twenty-five was to follow the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico, press on to the Pacific, and then head north for Oregon, their mission to locate sites for large settlements. In March, Lyman Wight and George Miller, writing from the Mormons' Wisconsin logging camp at Black River Falls, proposed a move to Texas. The Twelve sent a delegate to confer with Sam Houston, who assured them of a welcome in a region starved for inhabitants. To encompass these broad plans, Joseph revived his

earlier conception of a greater Zion. ‘The whole of America is Zion,’ he told the Saints. ‘From henceforth the elders shall build churches where ever the people receive the gospel.’”²

In his journal, Joseph noted, “There is oratory enough in the church to carry me into the presidential chair on the first slide,” and in a campaign speech he delivered on March 7, 1844, he said, “When I look into the Eastern papers and see how popular I am, I am afraid I shall be president.”³

Persecutions against the Saints had not stopped. In addition, dissent from within began to mount over legal issues and also the issue of polygamy. A newly founded newspaper, the *Nauvoo Expositor* published only one edition on June 7, 1844, which criticized Joseph Smith for teaching a principle, which in practice was known as polygamy, and also in light of Joseph’s recent King Follet Sermon, for teaching the doctrine of exaltation. Joseph called the Nauvoo City Council together to discuss this issue. One of the members later wrote, “Brother Joseph called a meeting at his own house and told us that God showed to him in an open vision in daylight that if he did not destroy that printing press that it would cause the blood of the Saints to flow in the streets...”⁴

Joseph’s fear of another mob motivated him. In court, Joseph spoke at length to a large assembly about his willingness to fight “if the mob compel me to it.” On June 11, Joseph gave his reason for suppressing the *Expositor*. He thought the paper was an attempt to “excite the jealousy and prejudice of the people of the surrounding country, by libels, and slanderous articles upon the citizens and City Council, for the purpose of destroying the ‘Charter’ of said city, and for the purpose of raising suspicion, wrath, and indignation among a certain class of the less honorable portion of mankind, to commit acts of violence upon the innocent and unsuspecting.”⁵

A chain of events had been set in motion that would very soon result in Joseph's death. He was under attack by those who were once his closest friends and also by mobs who wanted to drive the Saints from their midst. In his final days, Joseph found himself caught between a rock and a hard place with no apparent way out. He was cornered by two forces: the law and order represented by Governor Thomas Ford, and the conspiracy to assassinate him led by a man named Thomas Sharp who was owner, editor, and publisher of the *Warsaw Signal*. Ford was a reasonable man who wanted Joseph to answer in court for destroying the *Expositor* while keeping the passions in Hancock County in check. That same day, June 11, Sharp, who was passionately opposed to Joseph Smith and the Saints, published an editorial in his newspaper the following:

War and extermination is inevitable! Citizens
ARISE, ONE and ALL!!!—Can you stand by, and
suffer such INFERNAL DEVILS! to ROB men of
their property and RIGHTS, without avenging them.
We have no time for comment, every man will make
his own. LET IT BE MADE WITH POWDER AND
BALL!!!⁶

Before that, Sharp printed an open letter to Joseph Smith on June 5, stating:

No one can picture a wretch so depraved, and
loathsome as yourself, Yes Joe! We have that
confidence in your saintship, that we do not believe
that the concentrated extract of all the abominations of
the Infernal Regions, can add one stain to the
blackness of your character. Look in a mirror Joe and
you will see the reflection of the most detestable
wretch that the earth contains.⁷

And two weeks before the *Nauvoo Expositor* was destroyed, Thomas Sharp wrote:

Joe Smith is not safe out of Nauvoo, and we would not be surprised to hear of his death by violent means in a short time.⁸

On Saturday, June 22, in the late evening, Joseph called his brother Hyrum, Willard Richards, John Taylor, William W. Phelps, A.C. Hodge, John L. Butler...and others into his upper room and said, “Brethren, here is a letter from the Governor, which I wish to have read.” After it was read through, Joseph remarked, “There is no mercy—no mercy here.” Hyrum said, “No; just as sure as we fall into their hands we are dead men.” Joseph replied, “Yes; what shall we do, Brother Hyrum?” He replied, “I don’t know.” All at once Joseph’s countenance brightened up and he said, “The way is open. It is clear to my mind what to do. All they want is Hyrum and myself; then tell everybody to go about their business, and not to collect in groups, but to scatter about. There is no doubt they will come here and search for us. Let them search; they will not harm you in person or property, and not even a hair of your head. We will cross the river tonight, and go away to the West.” He made a move to go out of the house to cross the river. When out of doors he told Butler and Hodge to take the *Maid of Iowa*...get it to the upper landing, and put his and Hyrum’s families and effects upon her; then go down the Mississippi and up the Ohio River to Portsmouth, where they should hear from them. He then took Hodge by the hand and said, “Now, Brother Hodge, let what will come, don’t deny the faith, and all will be well.” [Joseph] told Stephen Markham that, “If I and Hyrum were ever taken again we should be massacred, or I was not a prophet of God.”⁹

Later that night, Hyrum told Reynolds Cahoon that a company of men was seeking to kill his brother Joseph, and the Lord had warned him to flee to the Rocky Mountains to save his life. He then said goodbye to Brother Cahoon. Joseph followed shortly with tears streaming from his face, having just left his family. While they waited on the banks of the river for the skiff, Joseph sent for William Phelps and instructed him to take their families to Cincinnati by steamboat, and thereafter begin petitioning the President of the United States and also Congress for redress of grievances.

The following morning on Sunday, a posse arrived in Nauvoo to arrest Joseph, but could not find him. They immediately returned to Carthage to report to Governor Ford. Governor Ford was purported to say that he would send troops to guard the city of Nauvoo until Joseph and Hyrum were found even if it took three years to do it. That afternoon, Joseph's wife Emma sent word to Joseph, insisting that he give himself up. Reynolds Cahoon had taken a letter to Joseph, written by Emma, desiring him to return. Reynolds then told Joseph about the intentions of the troops to guard the city and urged Joseph to return with him and informed him that the governor had pledged to ensure a safe and fair trial by law.

Reynolds and others then accused Joseph of being a coward for abandoning the Saints to which Joseph replied, "If my life is of no value to my friends it is of none to myself." Joseph then asked his younger friend and personal bodyguard Porter Rockwell what he should do. Rockwell, eight years Joseph's junior deferred to Joseph's judgment, vowing to lie down with Joseph wherever he made his bed. Joseph then asked Hyrum's advice to which Hyrum replied, "Let us go back and give ourselves up, and see the thing out," to which Joseph replied, "if you go back, I will go with you, but we shall be butchered." It was decided that they would return and give themselves up.

Mosiah Hancock, a young convert to the church and close associate of Joseph Smith related his first-hand account the following in his autobiography:

Well do I remember the Prophet's speech from a frame in front of his mansion--where he said, "Brethren, I now roll this work onto the shoulders of the Twelve; and they shall bear and send this Gospel to every nation under Heaven." He asked the Legions if they were not all his boys, and they shouted "Yes!" I stood on the rail of the fence in front of the mansion. When the Prophet said, "Brethren, the Lord Almighty has this day revealed to me something I never comprehended before! That is—I have friends who have at a respectful distance been ready to ward off the blows of the adversary. (He brought his hand down on my father's head as he was acting as body-guard to the Prophet) While others have pretended to be my friends, and have crept into my bosom and become vipers, and have been my most deadly enemies"...Before the Prophet spoke from the frame, he had started to go to the rocky mountains, and went as far a Montrose; but through the interference of some pretended friends, he returned. I was a witness to these things—and when the Prophet spoke from the frame, he spoke with power, and the people loved him.

The next day the Prophet came to our home and stopped in our carpenter shop and stood by the turning lathe. I went and got my map for him. "Now," he said, "I will show you the travels of this people." He then showed our travels through Iowa, and said, "Here you will make a place for the winter; and here you will

travel west until you come to the valley of the Great Salt Lake! You will build cities to the North and to the South, and to the East and to the West; and you will become a great and wealthy people in that land. But, the United States will not receive you with the laws which God desires you to live, and you will have to go to where the Nephites lost their power. They worked in the United Order for 166 years, and the Saints have got to become proficient in the laws of God before they can meet the Lord Jesus Christ, or even the city of Enoch.” He said we will not travel the shape of the horse shoe for there we will await the action of the government. Placing his finger on the map, I should think about where Snowflake, Arizona is situated, or it could have been Mexico, he said, “The government will not receive you with the laws that God designed you to live, and those who are desirous to live the laws of God will have to go South. You will live to see men arise in power in the Church who will seek to put down your friends and the friends of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many will be hoisted because of their money and the worldly learning which they seem to be in possession of; and many who are the true followers of our Lord and Savior will be cast down because of their poverty. There will be two great political parties in this country. One will be called the Republican, and the other the Democrat party. These two parties will go to war and out of these two parties will spring another party which will be the Independent American Party. The United States will spend her strength and means warring in foreign lands until other nations will say, ‘Let's divide up the lands of the United States,’ then the people of the U. S. will unite and swear by the

blood of their fore-fathers, that the land shall not be divided. Then the country will go to war, and they will fight until one half of the U. S. army will give up, and the rest will continue to struggle. They will keep on until they are very ragged and discouraged, and almost ready to give up—when the boys from the mountains will rush forth in time to save the American Army from defeat and ruin. And they will say, ‘Brethren, we are glad you have come; give us men, henceforth, who can talk with God.’ Then you will have friends, but you will save the country when it's liberty hangs by a hair, as it were.”¹⁰

On June 23, Joseph and Hyrum left for Carthage to stand trial. Passing through Nauvoo and by the temple, Joseph remarked with admiration that this was the loveliest place and best people under the heavens. “Little do they know the trials that await them.” As they continued to Carthage, Joseph declared, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am calm as a summer’s morning. I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all men. If they take my life I shall die an innocent man, and my blood shall cry from the ground for vengeance, and it shall be said of me ‘He was murdered in cold blood.’”¹¹

Once they were in custody, their charges were increased to treason to prevent them from posting bail. Then on June 27, 1844, at about 5 p.m., an armed mob of men with black-painted faces stormed the jail where Joseph and Hyrum were held. Hyrum was shot in the face and killed instantly. Joseph ran to the window as armed men broke through the door and fired upon him. He fell out of the window of the second-floor room crying, “Oh Lord, my God!” He died just after hitting the ground but was shot several more times before the mobs dispersed. Rather than heed the Lord and head west,

he heeded his wife, his friends, and his enemies who pretended to be his friends, and he delivered himself to ravening wolves. He was the first United States presidential candidate to be assassinated.

Joseph Smith loved liberty. He strongly supported the United States Constitution and endorsed its principles. He inherited such a strong love for it from his patriotic forefathers. His relationship with the United States government was a much different story. He and the Saints endured countless conflicts with several state governments as well as the federal government, which arose from the persecutions leveled against the Saints, most heavily in Missouri where Zion could have been redeemed. This never deterred Joseph who tirelessly importuned the government for redresses of grievances. Despite all that he endured, he never stopped invoking or upholding the Constitution; he truly was its friend. He often spoke of the Constitution, the United States, and the destiny of the country, and he gave evidence of its future peril. He prophesied at different times and in different places, interchanging expressions such as *hanging by a thread*, *on the brink of ruin*, *hanging by a single hair*, etc., to describe the jeopardy that he saw the country would one day face. He never offered a specific time for its fulfillment, but it left the Saints wondering with anticipation. Because of his passion for befriending the Constitution, it has inspired many people even today to be on guard against threats to it and to stay vigilant in defending it against all enemies, both foreign and especially domestic. More and more people today are feeling a sense of urgency and are now awakening to a sense of their awful situation (Ether 8:24).

NOTES

1. B.H. Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 6 (Deseret Book Company, 1978), p. 210-211.
2. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), p. 519.
3. Michael Van Wagenen, *The Texas Republic and the Mormon Kingdom of God* (Texas A&M University Press, 2002) p. 25.
4. *George Laub's Nauvoo Journal*, BYU Studies Quarterly, vol. 18, Iss. 2, Article 5.
5. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith Rough Stone Rolling* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), p. 541.
6. *Warsaw Signal*, June 11, 1844.
7. *Warsaw Signal*, June 5, 1844.
8. *Warsaw Signal*, May 29, 1844.
9. B.H. Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 6 (Deseret Book Company, 1978), p. 545-546.
10. Mosiah Hancock, *Autobiography of Mosiah Hancock*, typescript, BYU-S (1834-1865).
11. B.H. Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 6 (Deseret Book Company, 1978), p. 555.

CHAPTER 3

CENTRALIZATION OF POWER

America's founding fathers established a limited and decentralized government. It was not until the Civil War that the United States became the highly centralized economic empire that Americans live in today. Under Abraham Lincoln's presidency, the American System became a reality, which system was put forth by Whig member Henry Clay. It was an economic plan favored by the Whigs, which involved passing high tariffs (taxes), a nationalized bank to promote commerce, and federal subsidies to advance profitable internal improvements such as roads, bridges, etc., the focus being the improvement of transportation infrastructure. The more quickly goods could be moved back and forth, the more profitable men could become.

In the early 1800s, state and local governments began to subsidize internal improvements, but due to the high volume of waste and corruption, the results were failure and financial losses. These subsidies were such disasters that some newer states' constitutions prohibited grants and loans to private entities. The South wanted no part of this corruption or the high tariffs imposed upon them by the

federal government. The 1828 Tariff of Abominations imposed rates as high as fifty percent on manufactured goods and was opposed by the southern states who argued that the tariff was unconstitutional. Inefficient domestic companies could easily compete with superior foreign companies. The South, being primarily agricultural, produced cotton and other crops such as rice and tobacco. The North could purchase these raw materials and convert them into manufactured goods. At this time, foreign manufactured goods faced high taxes, but foreign raw materials were free of tariffs. So the domestic manufacturing industries of the North benefited greatly, first as producers who enjoyed the protection of said taxes, and again as consumers with a free raw materials market. So the raw materials industries of the South were left to struggle against foreign competition. And because manufactured goods were not produced in the South, they had to be shipped from the North or be imported. The South found it necessary to maintain their states' rights which, also unfortunately, included the issue of slavery. The southern states found it necessary to secede from the Union for essentially the same reasons that the colonies found it necessary to secede from England the previous century. The Declaration of Independence was, in effect, a declaration of secession.

The right of secession was fundamental in our founding fathers' philosophy. John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States and the son of second United States President, John Adams, said the following:

The indissoluble link of union between the people of the several states of this confederated nation is, after all, not in the right but in the heart. If the day should ever come (may Heaven avert it!) when the affections of the people of these States shall be alienated from each other; when the fraternal spirit shall give way to cold indifference, or collision of

interests shall fester into hatred, the bands of political associations will not long hold together parties no longer attracted by the magnetism of conciliated interests and kindly sympathies; to part in friendship from each other, than to be held together by constraint. Then will be the time for reverting to the precedents which occurred at the formation and adoption of the Constitution, to form again a more perfect Union by dissolving that which could no longer bind, and to leave the separated parts to be reunited by the law of political gravitation to the center.¹

Alexis de Tocqueville also noted:

The Union was formed by the voluntary agreement of the States; and in uniting together they have not forfeited their nationality, nor have they been reduced to the condition of one and the same people. If one of the states chooses to withdraw from the compact, it would be difficult to disprove its right of doing so, and the Federal Government would have no means of maintaining its claims directly either by force or right.²

Edward Everett, who ran as John Bell's vice presidential candidate in 1860 in the Constitutional Union Party, declared:

To expect to hold fifteen States in the Union by force is preposterous. The idea of a civil war, accompanied as it would be, by a servile insurrection, is too monstrous to be entertained for a moment.³

Hundreds of newspapers in the North contained editorials with public opinions regarding the right of the South to secede (Source: Howard Cecil Perkins, *Northern Editorials on Secession*, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964). The following are samples of such statements from the many newspapers in the North:

We sympathize with and justify the South because their rights have been invaded to the extreme.⁴

Any violation of the constitution by the general government, deliberately persisted in would relieve the state or states injured by such violation from all legal and moral obligations to remain in the union or yield obedience to the federal government.⁵

The leading and most influential papers of the union believe that any State of the Union has the right to secede.⁶

We believe that the right of any member of this Confederacy to dissolve its political relations with the others and assume an independent position is absolute.⁷

An attempt to subjugate the seceded States, even if successful, could produce nothing but evil—evil unmitigated in character and appalling in extent.⁸

There is a growing sentiment throughout the North in favor of letting the Gulf States go.⁹

The Civil War historically seems to have revolved around the

issue of slavery, but if slavery had truly been the primary issue of war, President Lincoln could have ended slavery as many other countries had already done through peaceful compensated emancipation, which Joseph Smith had previously proposed during his own candidacy. Lincoln did not need to wage war against the South to free the slaves, but such a war was necessary to strip Southerners of their right to secede. Furthermore, he was not shy about expressing his opposition to racial equality. His clearest statement on the matter was in response to Senator Stephen Douglas in an 1858 debate in Ottawa, Illinois in which he said:

I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality; and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. I have never said anything to the contrary.¹⁰

Lerone Bennet Jr., an African-American scholar, author, and social historian, known for his analysis of race relations in the United States, wrote:

On at least fourteen occasions between 1854 and 1860, Lincoln said unambiguously that he believed the Negro race was inferior to the White race. In Galesburg, he referred to “the inferior races.” Who were “the inferior races?” African Americans, he said, Mexicans, who he called “mongrels,” and probably all colored people.¹¹

In his first inaugural address, President Lincoln announced the following:

I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.¹²

In a letter to New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley in 1862, Lincoln wrote:

My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union.¹³

But this contradicted what he had stated in his inaugural address that he had no constitutional authority to disturb slavery. His dictatorial power to declare his Emancipation Proclamation only applied to rebel territory, which he hoped to quash. Considering the possibility of an uprising of slaves in the South against their masters, they would have done Lincoln a huge favor. It was immediately criticized throughout the North and many parts of the world as a political gimmick. The New York World published an article stating:

The President has purposely made the proclamation inoperative in all places where we have gained a military footing which makes the slaves accessible. He has proclaimed emancipation only where he has notoriously no power to execute it. The exemption of

the accessible parts of Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia renders the proclamation not merely futile, but ridiculous.¹⁴

Conditions for African Americans were not much better in the North. In 1860, Eugene Berwanger wrote:

In virtually every phase of existence [in the North], Negroes found themselves systematically separated from whites. They were either excluded from railway cars, omnibuses, stagecoaches, and steamboats or assigned to special “Jim Crow” sections; they sat, when permitted, in secluded and remote corners of theaters and lecture halls; they could not enter most hotels, restaurants, and resorts, except as servants; they prayed in “Negro pews” in the white churches, and if partaking of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, they waited until the whites had been served the bread and wine. Moreover, they were often educated in segregated schools, punished in segregated prisons, nursed in segregated hospitals, and buried in segregated cemeteries...racial prejudice haunts its victim wherever he goes.¹⁵

The news of the Emancipation Proclamation was a shock to Northerners. They had not been informed by their government that they were dying by the tens of thousands for the sake of black strangers in the South where they had never set foot. This sparked riots in the North. Colonel Arthur Fremantle, a British eyewitness to the war and observer during the battle of Gettysburg wrote in his widely read memoirs:

The reports of outrages, hangings, and murder,

were now most alarming, the terror and anxiety were universal. All shops were shut: all carriages and omnibuses had ceased running. No colored man or woman was visible or safe in the railroad tracks torn up. The draft was suspended, and the mob evidently had the upper hand. The people who can't pay \$300 naturally hate being forced to fight in order to liberate the very race who they are most anxious should be slaves. It is their direct interest not only that all slaves should remain slaves, but that the free Northern Negroes who compete with them for labor should be sent to the South also.¹⁶

Furthermore, American Civil War Historian, James McPherson wrote:

The Emancipation Proclamation also caused a desertion crisis in the U.S. army. At least 200,000 Federal soldiers deserted; another 120,000 evaded conscription; and at least 90,000 Northern men fled to Canada to avoid conscription while thousands more hid out in the mountains of central Pennsylvania to place themselves beyond the reach of enrollment officers.¹⁷

The rate of enlistments severely dropped along with the subscriptions to war bonds. McPherson also noted:

Plenty of soldiers believed that the proclamation had changed the purpose of the war. They professed to feel betrayed. They were willing to risk their lives for the Union, they said, but not for black freedom.¹⁸

For millennia, the institution of slavery had thrived without condemnation until abolitionism began to surface as a movement in England prior to the American Revolution. By the late 1880s, Brazil, which hosted that last remnant of slavery in the Americas had achieved emancipation. Peaceful emancipation was achieved in Argentina in 1813, Colombia in 1814, Chile in 1823, Central America in 1824, Mexico in 1829, Bolivia in 1831, Uruguay in 1842, French and Danish Colonies in 1848, Ecuador in 1851, and Peru and Venezuela in 1854.¹⁹

Peaceful compensated emancipation had already been achieved in the British Empire by 1840 where all the slaves had been freed. The emancipation of slaves had also been secured in the Dutch Colonies in 1863, Brazil between 1871 and 1878, Puerto Rico in 1873, and Cuba in 1886.²⁰

Thomas J. DiIorenzo, an economics professor, wrote in one of his several books about Abraham Lincoln the following:

Given the enormous costs of the war, including 620,000 military deaths, thousands of civilian deaths in the Southern states, hundreds of thousands of men crippled for life, the near destruction of the nearly 40 percent of the nation's economy, and the direct costs of the war itself, most Americans would likely have chosen compensated emancipation, which would have cost them a tiny, almost trivial, fraction of the cost of the alternative: total war. Lincoln never seriously offered the nation the opportunity.²¹

Abraham Lincoln was completely devoted to the Whig agenda of protectionism and government control of the money supply via a nationalized banking system, along with "internal improvements"

such as government-subsidized railroads. There is another word for this American system that was employed previously in Europe: mercantilism. Economist Murray Rothbard defined it as a system of statism, which employed economic fallacy to build up a structure of imperial state power, as well as a special subsidy and monopolistic privilege to individuals or groups favored by the state.²²

Thomas Dilorenzo explained that nationalized banking was always an integral part of the mercantilist agenda. He wrote:

Mercantilists have always advocated having the government simply print paper money in order to finance their special-interest subsidies. That way, the cost of the subsidies can be more easily hidden from the public. If taxes must be raised to finance the subsidies, the taxpaying public pays a direct cost and may well object. But if the subsidies are financed by printing money, the economic cost becomes the inflation that is caused by printing money. More often than not, politicians then blame the inflation on “greedy corporations” who are supposedly raising their prices too much rather than the real culprits, government themselves.²³

Henry Clay was Abraham Lincoln’s model of a statesman. Edgar Lee Masters—attorney, poet, and biographer—wrote that Lincoln was the champion of the system that doled out favors to the strong to win their adherence to the government. Furthermore, he wrote the following:

His system offered shelter to devious schemes and corrupt enterprises...His example and his doctrines led to the creation of a party that had no platform to

announce, because its principles were plunder and nothing else.²⁴

Abraham Lincoln was a Whig at heart who sought the same form of government espoused by Henry Clay, also a Whig, contrary to the ideals of our founding fathers who not only advocated secession but applied it forcefully against England in defense of what they termed their unalienable rights. Or as they famously wrote:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government...²⁵

Furthermore, DiLorenzo succinctly wrote the following:

A crusade against slavery would have offered a compelling case for Lincoln's war, but he never made that case. Until the day he died, he insisted that the

war was being fought to deny Southerners the right of secession that virtually all the founding fathers believed was fundamental. Slavery, according to Lincoln, was only incidental to the real cause of the war: “saving the Union.” Lincoln called up 75,000 troops to suppress a rebellion, not to free slaves. Indeed, the official name of the war is “War of the Rebellion.” Lincoln and the Republican Party did use the slavery issue brilliantly, however, to advance their real objective: establishing a consolidated federal government and essentially destroying state sovereignty.²⁶

The war that Lincoln waged with disregard for individual and states’ rights indicated his desire for a consolidated empire. He wanted a national, centralized state as opposed to the federation of self-governing states of individuals, which the founding fathers guaranteed with the Bill of Rights. In the wake of the Civil War, Alexander Stephens wrote:

The contest, so commenced, which ended in the War, was, indeed, a contest between opposing principles; but not such as bore upon the policy of African subordination. They were principles deeply underlying all consideration of that sort. They involved the very nature and organic Structure of the Government itself. The conflict, on this question of Slavery, in the Federal Councils, from the beginning, was not a contest between the advocates or opponents of that peculiar Institution, but a contest, as stated before, between the supporters of a strictly, Federative Government, on the one side, and a thoroughly National one, on the other.²⁷

Abraham Lincoln executed a succession of unconstitutional acts, such as unilaterally declaring war on the Southern states, whereas Congress alone is granted constitutional power to declare war. He also declared martial law, suspending writs of habeas corpus throughout the term of his administration, imprisoning thousands of Northerners without trial, arresting newspaper publishers, and imprisoning them for being critical of him and his policies, censoring telegraphs, confiscating private property and also firearms, and much more. In 1864, he sent orders to General John Adams Dix ordering him to arrest newspaper publishers saying:

You will hold the persons so arrested in close custody until they can be brought to trial before a military commission for their offense. You will also take possession by military force of the printing establishments of the New York World and Journal of Commerce, and hold the same until further orders, and prohibit any further publication therefrom.²⁸

One of the many victims of Lincoln's dictatorial censorships of newspapers was Francis Scott Key's grandson, Francis Key Howard, who was imprisoned in the same Fort McHenry which Key had witnessed withstanding British bombardment in 1812, whereafter he composed "The Star-Spangled Banner." Howard spent over a year in prison without a trial and without even having been charged. Immediately after his release, he wrote a book wherein he penned his remarkable account. In it, he testified the following:

When I looked out in the morning, I could not help being struck by an odd and not pleasant coincidence. On that day forty-seven years before, my grandfather, Mr. [Francis Scott] Key, then prisoner on a British

ship, had witnessed the bombardment of Fort McHenry. When on the following morning the hostile fleet drew off, defeated, he wrote the song so long popular throughout the country, the “Star Spangled Banner.” As I stood upon the very scene of that conflict, I could not but contrast my position with his, forty-seven years before. The flag which he had then so proudly hailed, I saw waving at the same place over the victims of as vulgar and brutal a despotism as modern times have witnessed.²⁹

Francis Howard was passionate about denouncing Lincoln, so much so, that in the preface of his book, he stated the following:

The unlawful and oppressive acts of Mr. LINCOLN, his advisers, and subordinates, during the war between this Government and that of the Confederate States, will hereafter constitute no insignificant portion of the history of these times. As one of the victims of the despotism, which he succeeded in maintaining, in the Northern and Border States, for so long a period, I desire to add my testimony to that which has been heretofore furnished, in relation to the outrages perpetrated under his Administration; and I give publicity to this statement now, while the facts are fresh in the recollection of the public lest any one should at some remoter period venture to doubt its accuracy. I do not propose to discuss the absurdity of the theories on which Mr. LINCOLN claimed to exercise arbitrary power, nor the imbecility of his course. It is proper, however, in giving an account of the treatment, to which, in common with hundreds of other men, I was subjected,

to refer briefly to the position of affairs in Maryland, and the object of Mr. LINCOLN in inflicting on myself and my fellow sufferers the indignities and wrongs which we so long endured...³⁰

Abraham Lincoln has been called Honest Abe, The Liberator, The Great Emancipator, and more. According to DiLorenzo, “The Great Centralizer”³¹ is a much more apt nickname for him. Lincoln dedicated his political career to establish a system of oppressive taxes and corporate subsidies along with his willingness to plunge the United States into a bloody war in order to “save the Union.” Had he implemented peaceful compensated emancipation as many other countries previously accomplished with great success, he would have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. Furthermore, the financial toll would have been far less. His economic legacy was the realization of the American System championed by Henry Clay. He may have saved the Union geographically, but he effectively destroyed the principle of voluntary association of states and the decentralized form of government favored by America’s founding fathers. Abraham Lincoln’s willful violations of the United States Constitution have produced lasting effects that are still felt today.

NOTES

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8. *Detroit Free Press*, Feb. 19, 1861.
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10. *Lincoln's Reply to Douglas*, Ottawa, Illinois, August 21, 1858 in *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, ed. Roy P. Basler [New York: Da Capo Press, 1990], p. 445.
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18. James McPherson, *What They Fought For: 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), p. 63.
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20. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: Norton, 1974), p. 36.
21. Thomas J. DiIorenzo, *The Real Lincoln* (Three Rivers Press, 2003), p. 52.
22. Murray N. Rothbard, *The Logic of Action II, Cheltenham, England*

- (Edward Elgar, 1997), p. 43.
23. Thomas J. DiLorenzo, *The Real Lincoln* (Three Rivers Press, 2003), pp. 57-58.
 24. Edgar Lee Masters, *Lincoln the Man* (Columbia, S.C.: Foundation for American Education, 1997), p. 27.
 25. *Declaration of Independence*, 1776.
 26. Thomas J. DiLorenzo, *The Real Lincoln* (Three Rivers Press, 2003), p. 122.
 27. Alexander H. Stephens, *A Constitutional View of the Late War between the States* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1870), p. 9.
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 29. F. K. Howard, *Fourteen Months in American Bastiles* (Kelly, Hedian, & Piet, 1863), p. 9.
 30. F. K. Howard, *Fourteen Months in American Bastiles* (Kelly, Hedian, & Piet, 1863), p. 3.
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CHAPTER 4

A WATCHMAN

Ezra Taft Benson, born August 4, 1899, was the most outspoken champion of the United States Constitution next to Joseph Smith among the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Having served as the fifteenth United States Secretary of Agriculture during both presidential terms of President Dwight D. Eisenhower gave him a unique glimpse into American politics and world events. With encouragement from Church President David O. McKay, Benson, who at the time served as a church apostle, served simultaneously in the United States Cabinet. Benson was also an outspoken opponent of socialism and of communism. In 1961, during a general conference, he said, “No true Latter-day Saint and no true American can be a socialist or a communist or support programs leading in that direction.”¹

His outspokenness of anti-communism tended to put him at odds with other church leaders. Hugh B. Brown, a liberal political member of the church presidency pushed back, stating at one time:

The degree of a man’s aversion to communism

may not always be measured by the noise he makes in going about and calling everyone a communist who disagrees with his personal political bias...There is no excuse for members of this Church, especially men who hold the priesthood, to be opposing one another over communism.²

Benson also became involved with the John Birch Society, a political advocacy group, which was an organization opposed to communism and a proponent of limited government. This was an embarrassment to Hugh B. Brown and others (*Benson Embarrasses His Church*, Washington Post, January 22, 1963, B-23; *Church Embarrassed over Ezra Taft Benson Stand*, Ogden Standard-Examiner, January 22, 1963, 4; *Ezra Taft Benson Addresses Rally*, Deseret News, January 7, 1963, A-3). He had coincidentally been assigned missionary work in Europe that same year, taking him away from his activity with the JBS. Later, in 1966, he published a pamphlet titled *Civil Rights, Tools of Communist Deception*, and several years later, in 1969, he wrote and published *An Enemy Hath Done This*, a remarkable book in which he eagerly wrote:

If America is destroyed, it may be by Americans who salute the flag, sing the national anthem, march in patriotic parades, cheer Fourth of July speakers—normally good Americans, but Americans who fail to comprehend what is required to keep our country strong and free, Americans who have been lulled away into a false security. Great nations are never conquered from outside unless they are rotten inside.³

In his lifetime, Ezra Benson delivered powerfully inspiring and prophetic speeches, many of which are easily accessible today via the internet. He has written many books including *Farmers At the*

Crossroads (Devin-Adair, 1956), *So Shall Ye Reap* (Deseret Book Co., 1960), *Freedom To Farm* (Doubleday, 1960), *The Red Carpet* (Bookcraft, 1962), *Crossfire: The Eight Years With Eisenhower* (Doubleday, 1962), and *Title of Liberty* (Deseret Book Co., 1964). Many excerpts from his speeches and writings can be found in *Prophets, Principles and National Survival* (Publishers Press, 1964). He once asked boldly:

For years we have heard of the role the elders could play in saving the Constitution from total destruction. But how can the elders be expected to save it if they have not studied it and are not sure if it is being destroyed or what is destroying it? An informed patriotic gentile was dumbfounded when he heard of Joseph Smith's reported prophecy regarding the mission our elders could perform in saving the Constitution. He lived in a Mormon community with nice people who were busily engaged in other activities but who had little concern in preserving their freedom.⁴

He described how Satan is anxious to neutralize the membership, to keep them off balance and ineffective in the fight for freedom, particularly influencing them to argue that there is no need to get involved in the fight. All that is needed is to live the gospel. He went on to ask:

How would you have reacted if during the war in heaven someone had said to you, "Look, just do what's right, there is no need to get involved in the fight for free agency." It is obvious what the devil is trying to do, but it is sad to see many of us fall for this destructive line...

“General Moroni, one of the great men of the Book of Mormon, raised the ‘title of liberty’ and on it he inscribed these words: In memory of our God, of our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children. (Alma 46:12). Why didn’t he write upon it ‘Just live your religion, there is no need to concern yourselves about your freedom, your peace, your wives or your children.’ The reason he didn’t was because all of these things were a part of his religion, as they are of ours.”⁵

In 1973, he spoke again over the pulpit saying:

As watchmen on the tower of Zion, it is our obligation and right as leaders to speak out against current evils—evils that strike at the very foundation of all we hold dear as the true church of Christ and as members of Christian nations. As one of these watchmen, with a love for humanity, I accept humbly this obligation and challenge and gratefully strive to do my duty without fear. In times as serious as these, we must not permit fear of criticism to keep us from doing our duty, even at the risk of our counsel being tabbed as political, as government becomes more and more entwined in our daily lives. In the crisis through which we are now passing, we have been fully warned.

This has brought forth some criticism. There are some of us who do not want to hear the message. It embarrasses us. The things which are threatening our lives, our welfare, our freedoms are the very things some of us have been condoning. Many do not want

to be disturbed as they continue to enjoy their comfortable complacency. The Church is founded on eternal truth. We do not compromise principle. We do not surrender our standards regardless of current trends or pressures. Our allegiance to truth as a church is unwavering. Speaking out against immoral or unjust actions has been the burden of prophets and disciples of God from time immemorial. It was for this very reason that many of them were persecuted. Nevertheless, it was their God-given task, as watchmen on the tower, to warn the people.⁶

On Saturday, November 10, 1985, Ezra Taft Benson became the thirteenth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and was sustained by its members as the Lord's prophet on Earth. In his first address to the Latter-day Saints as president, he said:

As I have sought direction from the Lord, I have had reaffirmed in my mind and heart the declaration of the Lord to say nothing but repentance unto this generation...Watchmen—what of the night? We must respond by saying that all is not well in Zion...Unless we read the Book of Mormon and give heed to its teachings, the Lord has stated in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants that the whole Church is under condemnation: “And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all...And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written...That they may bring forth

fruit meet for their Father's kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion"...We have felt that scourge and judgment!⁷

The following day, Sunday, President Benson spoke again during general conference declaring:

In the opening session of this conference we talked about cleansing the inner vessel. And so we must...Now, in our day, the Lord has revealed the need to reemphasize the Book of Mormon to get the Church and all the children of Zion out from under condemnation—the scourge and judgment. This message must be carried to the members of the Church throughout the world...I bless you with increased *understanding* of the Book of Mormon. I promise you that from this moment forward, if we will daily sup from its pages and abide by its precepts, God will pour out upon each child of Zion and the Church a blessing hitherto unknown—and we will plead to the Lord that He will begin to lift the condemnation—the scourge and judgment.⁸

This was his clarion call: to read the Book of Mormon to obtain “a blessing hitherto unknown” to remove the condemnation. The next general conference, on October 1986, in the first talk given by President Benson, he posed the following questions:

Has the fact that we have had the Book of Mormon with us for over a century and a half made it seem less significant to us today? Do we remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon?...If the early Saints were rebuked for treating the Book of Mormon

lightly, are we under any less condemnation if we do the same? The Lord Himself bears testimony that it is of eternal significance. Can a small number of us bring the whole Church under condemnation because we trifle with sacred things? What will we say at the Judgment when we stand before Him and meet His probing gaze if we are among those described as forgetting the new covenant?...Over ten years ago I made the following statement regarding the Book of Mormon: Do eternal consequences rest upon our response to this book? Yes, either to our blessing or our condemnation...

I reaffirm those words to you this day. Let us not remain under condemnation, with its scourge and judgment, by treating lightly this great and marvelous gift the Lord has given to us. Rather, let us win the promises associated with treasuring it up in our hearts. In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 84, verses 54 to 58, we read: “And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion [D&C 84:54-58].⁹

He spoke again before the end of this session in which he explained:

The Book of Mormon must be reenthroned in the minds and hearts of our people. We must honor it by reading it, by studying it, by taking its precepts into our lives and transforming them into lives required of the true followers of Christ...No member of this Church can stand approved in the presence of God who has not seriously and carefully read the Book of Mormon...Do we, as Saints of the Most High God, treasure the word He has preserved for us at so great a cost?...How can we not stand condemned before the Lord if we treat them lightly by letting them do no more than gather dust on our shelves?¹⁰

The following year, on April 1987, President Benson gave the opening talk saying:

My dear brothers and sisters, as we commence another great general conference of the Church, my heart is full of love and gratitude to the Latter-day Saints throughout the world. During the past six months I have been deeply touched by the response of members of the Church who have heeded counsel to read and reread the word of the Lord as set forth in the Book of Mormon. This has resulted in increased spirituality and is helping to cleanse the inner vessel...

He then recounted the most significant event in the Book of Mormon which was Jesus Christ's visit to His people at Bountiful. President Benson then seemed to lament:

How few people in all the history of the world have heard the actual voice of God the Father speaking to them...

There is a reason President Benson focused on the account in Third Nephi of Jesus Christ's visit to His people at Bountiful. He continued quoting the Lord:

I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time. Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again...

How many members at the sound of President Benson's voice failed to perceive his message? Did they perceive how long President Benson had been sounding his clarion call? Did they spend any time pondering these things? Then he concluded:

May we daily be the manner of men He is and thus be prepared to meet and dwell with Him, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.¹¹

The next day, Sunday, President Benson concluded the April 1987 General Conference with:

The ancient preparation of the Book of Mormon, its preservation, and its publication verify Nephi's words that "the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all

his words.”

We are not required to prove that the Book of Mormon is true or is an authentic record through external evidences—though there are many. It never has been the case, nor is it so now, that the studies of the learned will prove the Book of Mormon true or false. The origin, preparation, translation, and verification of the truth of the Book of Mormon have all been retained in the hands of the Lord, and the Lord makes no mistakes. You can be assured of that...

I promise you that as you more diligently study modern revelation on gospel subjects, your power to teach and preach will be magnified and you will so move the cause of Zion that added numbers will enter into the house of the Lord as well as the mission field...I bless you with increased desire to flood the earth with the Book of Mormon, to gather out from the world the elect of God who are yearning for the truth but know not where to find it...¹²

Again the following October during general conference, President Benson delivered his ongoing message to remove the condemnation:

We have an increasing number who have been convinced, through the Book of Mormon, that Jesus is the Christ. Now we need an increasing number who will use the Book of Mormon to become committed to Christ. We need to be convinced and committed. Let us turn again to the Book of Mormon, this time to learn some principles about coming unto Christ, being committed to Him, centered in Him, and consumed in

Him...In the final letter recorded in the Book of Mormon from Mormon to his son Moroni, he gave counsel that applies to our day. Both father and son were seeing a whole Christian civilization fall because its people would not serve the God of the land, even Jesus Christ. Mormon wrote, “And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.”¹³

The following April, two years after his first address to the Saints as President of the church, he again spoke of cleansing the inward vessel. There seemed to be a pattern in all his addresses. Each seemed to build on the previous one, urging the Saints to “come unto Christ” and also to “find rest.” In his April address, he said:

My heart has been touched as I have learned of the many children, youth, and adults of the Church whose lives are being changed by the study of the Book of Mormon. You are helping to cleanse the inner vessel. *The great test of life* is obedience to God. “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). *The great task of life* is to learn the will of the Lord and then do it. *The great commandment of life* is to love the Lord...

President Benson appealed to the membership to “love” God. He quoted Moroni who said that we should “love” God with all we have. He reiterated God’s commandment not only to say but to do. He then emphasized this love which Lehi experienced. He is cluing us into

that “rest” that we can expect. He is cluing us into what God is anticipating.

The fruit that Lehi partook of in his vision and that filled his soul with exceeding great joy and that was most desirable above all things was the love of God. To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is all-consuming and all-encompassing. It is no lukewarm endeavor. It is total commitment of our very being—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—to a love of the Lord...

This is what the Lord meant when He said to “be fruitful” and to “bring forth fruit” meet for the kingdom of heaven. The entire point of the journey—the entire point of laboring—is to partake of the fruit. It is to find rest. One must put God first and above all else!

Joseph was put in prison because he put God first. If we were faced with a similar choice, where would we place our first loyalty? Can we put God ahead of security, peace, passions, wealth, and the honors of men? When Joseph was forced to choose, he was more anxious to please God than to please his employer’s wife. When we are required to choose, are we more anxious to please God than our boss, our teacher, our neighbor, or our date? The Lord said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matt. 10:37). One of the most difficult tests of all is when you have to choose between pleasing God or pleasing someone you love or respect—particularly a family member...

“Whatever God requires is right,” said the Prophet

Joseph Smith (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 256)—and so Nephi slew Laban. And God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Had Abraham loved Isaac more than God, would he have consented? As the Lord indicates in the Doctrine and Covenants, both Abraham and Isaac now sit as gods (see D&C 132:37). They were willing to offer or to be offered up as God required. They have a deeper love and respect for each other because both were willing to put God first...*The great test of life* is obedience to God. *The great task of life* is to learn the will of the Lord and then do it. *The great commandment of life* is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”¹⁴

President Benson’s health then began to decline. Thereafter, he asked Gordon B. Hinckley to read his—President Benson’s—next address which concluded the same conference in April 1988. In it, President Benson wrote:

May we all go to our homes rededicated to the sacred mission of the Church as so beautifully set forth in these conference sessions—to “invite all to come unto Christ” (D&C 20:59), “yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moro. 10:32)...Are we as families and individuals reading daily from the Book of Mormon and using its teachings to bless and perfect our lives and those of our children?...I pray that we will be obedient to God, learn His will and do it, and, above all, that we will keep the first and great commandment—to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength...Let us all come unto Christ and be perfected in Him, I humbly pray in the name of

Jesus Christ, amen.¹⁵

In October of that year, President Benson gave his final address in person:

This has been a landmark year in the history of the Church in the use of the keystone of our religion—the Book of Mormon...The Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to “sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [His] elect.” (Moses 7:62.) This sacred volume of scripture needs to become more central in our preaching, our teaching, and our missionary work...At present, the Book of Mormon is studied in our Sunday School and seminary classes every fourth year. This four-year pattern, however, must not be followed by Church members in their personal and family study. We need to read daily from the pages of the book that will get a man “nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” (*History of the Church*, 4:461.)...The time is long overdue for a massive flooding of the earth with the Book of Mormon for the many reasons which the Lord has given. In this age of the electronic media and the mass distribution of the printed word, God will hold us accountable if we do not now move the Book of Mormon in a monumental way...

“Few men on earth,” said Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “either in or out of the Church, have caught the vision of what the Book of Mormon is all about. Few are they among men who know the part it has played and will yet play in preparing the way for the coming of Him of whom it is a new witness. ... The Book of Mormon shall so affect men that the

whole earth and all its peoples will have been influenced and governed by it...There is no greater issue ever to confront mankind in modern times than this: Is the Book of Mormon the mind and will and voice of God to all men?" (*Millennial Messiah* pp. 159, 170, 179.) We testify that it is...Now, my good Saints, we have a great work to perform in a very short time. We must flood the earth with the Book of Mormon—and get out from under God’s condemnation for having treated it lightly. (See D&C 84:54–58.)...My beloved Saints, I am now entering my ninetieth year. I am getting older and less vigorous...

I do not know fully why God has preserved my life to this age, but I do know this: That for the present hour He has revealed to me the absolute need for us to move the Book of Mormon forward now in a marvelous manner. You must help with this burden and with this blessing which He has placed on the whole Church, even all the children of Zion...Moses never entered the promised land. Joseph Smith never saw Zion redeemed. Some of us may not live long enough to see the day when the Book of Mormon floods the earth and when the Lord lifts His condemnation. (See D&C 84:54–58.) But, God willing, I intend to spend all my remaining days in that glorious effort.¹⁶

President Benson’s final words in his address and his challenge were remarkable. This was the last time he stood up in any general conference session to address the Saints as a watchman on the tower, as a friend and fierce defender of the Constitution, and as a champion of the Book of Mormon. Thereafter, the admonishment to seek to

remove our condemnation by church leaders ceased. There was only one other time since then that any church leader spoke on the subject. Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke at a BYU fireside on June 6, 1993, where he declared:

Along with other General Authorities, I have a clear recollection of the General Authority temple meeting on 5 March 1987. For a year, President Benson had been stressing the reading of the Book of Mormon. Repeatedly he had quoted these verses from the Doctrine and Covenants, including the Lord's statement that Saints' conduct had "brought the whole church under condemnation." In that temple meeting, President Benson reread those statements and declared, "This condemnation has not been lifted, nor will it be until we repent." He also repeated his declaration of a year earlier that "in our day the Lord has inspired His servant to reemphasize the Book of Mormon to get the Church out from under condemnation."¹⁷

As of this day, there is no recorded revelation from the Lord to the church that our condemnation has been removed. The Book of Mormon was so important to the Lord that He tasked Joseph Smith to bring it forth by the power of God and to make it available to the world before commencing the labor of forming and organizing the church, and also building up the kingdom of God beginning with America, or in other words, redeeming Zion. Today, Zion is not yet redeemed, the Constitution hangs by a thread, and our liberty to accomplish this work continues to deteriorate.

NOTES

1. *The American Heritage of Freedom: A Plan of God*, Improvement Era (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, December 1961).
2. *Honor the Priesthood*, Improvement Era (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, June 1962).
3. Ezra Taft Benson, *An Enemy Hath Done This* (Parliament Publishers, 1969), p. 6.
4. Ezra Taft Benson, *An Enemy Hath Done This* (Parliament Publishers, 1969), p. 313.
5. Ezra Taft Benson, *An Enemy Hath Done This* (Parliament Publishers, 1969), pp. 314-315.
6. *Watchman, Warn the Wicked*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, July 1973).
7. *Cleansing The Inner Vessel*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1986).
8. *A Sacred Responsibility*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1986).
9. *The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 1986).
10. *The Gift of Modern Revelation*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 1986).
11. *The Savior's Visit to American*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1987).
12. *The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1987).
13. *Come Unto Christ*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 1987).
14. *The Great Commandment—Love the Lord*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1988).
15. *Come unto Christ, and Be Perfected in Him*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1988).
16. *Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 1988).
17. *Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, March 1994).

CHAPTER 5

A WARNING

The Book of Mormon was brought forth by the power of God to serve as a witness and also a warning. The primary purpose of its authors, according to Moroni's title page, is "to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations." Moroni also seemed to indicate a secondary purpose of the Book of Mormon, which is to warn us in the last days that conspiring men are always secretly combining to overthrow the liberty of men and women in order to bring them into bondage and captivity. Such was often the case throughout the millennial span of the Book of Mormon. Its authors hoped that we today would learn from their mistakes and be wiser than they were.

As the final author of the writings contained in the Book of Mormon, Moroni was also the last surviving Nephite faithful to God who suffered the ruins of war by his apostate and dissident extended

family the Lamanites. After his father Mormon had died in their final great battle, Moroni was left alone to finish his father's work of abridging the record, adding his own words:

30 Behold, I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall have my words.

31 Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been.¹

In George Orwell's book *1984*, the proletariat—a Marxist term—was the working class of Oceania. They were a barely educated people who provided the vast majority of labor. They were no better than animals to INGSOC's—a syllabic abbreviation of English Socialism—upper crust party members. In *The Matrix* movie, the people who lived inside the matrix world were kept alive, although permanently asleep, in a dream-world throughout their lifespans by machines of artificial intelligence to function as nothing more than batteries used for powering the system. These fictional dystopian civilizations are typically born from and through the decadence and the slothfulness of their people and their failure to prevent despotic men from overthrowing their liberty. In the Book of Mormon, one such despot was Amalickiah. But before his role in the historical context of the book is covered, the stage must be set.

In the Book of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon, there was a king by the name of Mosiah who had four sons who had dissented from their faith and had led away the hearts of many Nephites to rebel against God. After having been visited by an angel of God and chastened with power, they sought diligently to repair all the damage they had done to the church of their own free will. In their newly

converted and penitent condition, they also desired to visit their enemies the Lamanites who had long since separated from the Nephites at the foundation of their civilizations, their forefather Laman having rebelled against the Lord, and desiring to kill his youngest brother Nephi who was faithful to God when we first begin reading the Book of Mormon.

This schism, which ignited generations upon generations of bloody family feuding, reinforced the Lamanites' hatred of the Nephites and motivated them to plunder and kill the Nephites whenever possible. King Mosiah allowed his sons to proselytize the Lamanites only after receiving word from the Lord that they would be blessed in softening the hearts of many Lamanites. This resulted in the conversion of countless Lamanites to the Lord. Many thousands of converted Lamanites thereafter migrated to live with the Nephites in peace and they became so dedicated to the Lord that they were considered zealous by the Nephites themselves. These converted Lamanites changed their name to Anti-Nephi-Lehi and did not want to be known as Lamanites anymore. They also made a covenant with God that they would never again shed the blood of another person, and as a token of their oaths, they buried their weapons deep in the earth.

This kind of shift in the societies of the Nephites and the Lamanites left vacuums of power and also labor. When King Mosiah became very old, he desired that his oldest son succeed him as king, but his son refused. All four sons, still penitent, had no desire for power whatsoever, but they desired only to serve the Lord. This posed a problem for the Nephite kingdom. King Mosiah, with the approval of the people, instituted a new system of government where judges, including a chief judge were elected by the voice of the people. This new reign of judges, founded on the principle of liberty, gave the people the opportunity to govern themselves and to worship God freely. There were still countless Lamanites who desired to

destroy the Nephites or to bring them into subjugation. One of them was named Zerahemnah who was a dissenter of the Nephites and also a chief captain of the Lamanite armies, and who also had an intense hatred of their newly converted Lamanite brethren to the Lord.

9 And now the design of the Nephites was to support their lands, and their houses, and their wives, and their children, that they might preserve them from the hands of their enemies; and also that they might preserve their rights and their privileges, yea, and also their liberty, that they might worship God according to their desires.

10 For they knew that if they should fall into the hands of the Lamanites, that whosoever should worship God in spirit and in truth, the true and the living God, the Lamanites would destroy.

11 Yea, and they also knew the extreme hatred of the Lamanites towards their brethren, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, who were called the people of Ammon—and they would not take up arms, yea, they had entered into a covenant and they would not break it—therefore, if they should fall into the hands of the Lamanites they would be destroyed.

12 And the Nephites would not suffer that they should be destroyed; therefore they gave them lands for their inheritance...

The Nephites always made preparations for their defenses and, at this time, appointed a man over all their armies.

16 Now, the leader of the Nephites, or the man who had been appointed to be the chief captain over the Nephites—now the chief captain took the command

of all the armies of the Nephites—and his name was Moroni;

17 And Moroni took all the command, and the government of their wars. And he was only twenty and five years old when he was appointed chief captain over the armies of the Nephites.

18 And it came to pass that he met the Lamanites in the borders of Jershon, and his people were armed with swords, and with cimeters, and all manner of weapons of war...

Jershon was the name of the land given to the converted Lamanites to live unmolested in peace. Captain Moroni determined to defend them and to prevent Zerahemnah and his armies from destroying them. The battle that ensued was bloody and terrible. Never before in their history had the Lamanites come down with such hatred and determination to destroy the Nephites. Despite the Nephite preparations, the Lamanites succeeded in their fierce anger to split the armor of the Nephites that many of their arms were severed in the process.

43 Now in this case the Lamanites did fight exceedingly; yea, never had the Lamanites been known to fight with such exceedingly great strength and courage, no, not even from the beginning.

44 And they were inspired by the Zoramites and the Amalekites, who were their chief captains and leaders, and by Zerahemnah, who was their chief captain, or their chief leader and commander; yea, they did fight like dragons, and many of the Nephites were slain by their hands, yea, for they did smite in two many of their head-plates, and they did pierce many of their breastplates, and they did smite off

many of their arms; and thus the Lamanites did smite in their fierce anger.

45 Nevertheless, the Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church.

46 And they were doing that which they felt was the duty which they owed to their God; for the Lord had said unto them, and also unto their fathers, that: Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies.

47 And again, the Lord has said that: Ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed. Therefore for this cause were the Nephites contending with the Lamanites, to defend themselves, and their families, and their lands, their country, and their rights, and their religion.

48 And it came to pass that when the men of Moroni saw the fierceness and the anger of the Lamanites, they were about to shrink and flee from them. And Moroni, perceiving their intent, sent forth and inspired their hearts with these thoughts—yea, the thoughts of their lands, their liberty, yea, their freedom from bondage.

49 And it came to pass that they turned upon the Lamanites, and they cried with one voice unto the Lord their God, for their liberty and their freedom from bondage.

50 And they began to stand against the Lamanites with power; and in that selfsame hour that they cried unto the Lord for their freedom, the Lamanites began

to flee before them; and they fled even to the waters of Sidon.

51 Now, the Lamanites were more numerous, yea, by more than double the number of the Nephites; nevertheless, they were driven insomuch that they were gathered together in one body in the valley, upon the bank by the river Sidon.

52 Therefore the armies of Moroni encircled them about, yea, even on both sides of the river, for behold, on the east were the men of Lehi.

53 Therefore when Zerahemnah saw the men of Lehi on the east of the river Sidon, and the armies of Moroni on the west of the river Sidon, that they were encircled about by the Nephites, they were struck with terror.

54 Now Moroni, when he saw their terror, commanded his men that they should stop shedding their blood.²

Captain Moroni then offered Zerahemnah a chance to lay down his weapons, leave in peace, and that if he made an oath never to come again to war, he would spare him and the Lamanites. Zerahemnah refused his offer until after the fighting resumed and he was about to be destroyed.

19 Now Zerahemnah, when he saw that they were all about to be destroyed, cried mightily unto Moroni, promising that he would covenant and also his people with them, if they would spare the remainder of their lives, that they never would come to war again against them.

20 And it came to pass that Moroni caused that the work of death should cease again among the people. And he took the weapons of war from the Lamanites;

and after they had entered into a covenant with him of peace they were suffered to depart into the wilderness.³

The Nephites suffered tremendous losses, but King Mosiah's passing left many Nephites who did not like the new system of government or the priests and teachers who had been appointed in the church. Consequently, dissensions arose. A man named Amalickiah wanted the people to have a king again, and he wanted to be that king.

4 And Amalickiah was desirous to be a king; and those people who were wroth were also desirous that he should be their king; and they were the greater part of them the lower judges of the land, and they were seeking for power.

5 And they had been led by the flatteries of Amalickiah, that if they would support him and establish him to be their king that he would make them rulers over the people...

Captain Moroni returned home from his bloody battle against Zerahemnah. While recuperating, he learned of Amalickiah's uprising among his people the Nephites.

11 And now it came to pass that when Moroni, who was the chief commander of the armies of the Nephites, had heard of these dissensions, he was angry with Amalickiah.

12 And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole.

13 And he fastened on his head-plate, and his breastplate, and his shields, and girded on his armor about his loins; and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat, (and he called it the title of liberty) and he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the land —

14 For thus were all the true believers of Christ, who belonged to the church of God, called by those who did not belong to the church.

15 And those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come.

16 And therefore, at this time, Moroni prayed that the cause of the Christians, and the freedom of the land might be favored.

17 And it came to pass that when he had poured out his soul to God, he named all the land which was south of the land Desolation, yea, and in fine, all the land, both on the north and on the south—A chosen land, and the land of liberty.

18 And he said: Surely God shall not suffer that we, who are despised because we take upon us the name of Christ, shall be trodden down and destroyed, until we bring it upon us by our own transgressions...

With his new title of liberty, a great number of people came running together to rally around Captain Moroni in support of their newly established government, and to prevent Amalickiah and his supporters from succeeding with their coup. When Amalickiah saw

that the people who rallied around Captain Moroni exceeded the number of his fellow dissenters, he immediately took his armies and headed into the wilderness to join the Lamanites to incite them to war against the Nephites. Captain Moroni and his men pursued Amalickiah and his men and managed to capture them except for a small number who had escaped. Captain Moroni then returned to his capital city of Zarahemla with the captured men and made the same offer to them that he had previously offered Zerahemnah and his Lamanite army. But only a few rejected his offer to enter into a covenant of freedom.

35 And it came to pass that whomsoever of the Amalickiahites that would not enter into a covenant to support the cause of freedom, that they might maintain a free government, he caused to be put to death; and there were but few who denied the covenant of freedom.⁴

Meanwhile, Amalickiah went over to the Lamanite lands and stirred them up to anger to the point that their king sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom among all his people that they should all gather themselves together again to go to battle against the Nephites. Many Lamanites were afraid to go to war against the Nephites and lose their lives, but they were also afraid of their king. Many of these were probably part of Zerahemnah's armies, but the record is silent on this. We never hear from Zerahemnah again. The Lamanite king was furious because of their disobedience, so he gave Amalickiah command over those Lamanites who were still obedient to the king and commanded him to go and compel them to arms.

4 Now behold, this was the desire of Amalickiah; for he being a very subtle man to do evil therefore he laid the plan in his heart to dethrone the king of the Lamanites.

5 And now he had got the command of those parts of the Lamanites who were in favor of the king; and he sought to gain favor of those who were not obedient; therefore he went forward to the place which was called Onidah, for thither had all the Lamanites fled; for they discovered the army coming, and, supposing that they were coming to destroy them, therefore they fled to Onidah, to the place of arms...

Now that Amalickiah was made commander of one army, he went after the Lamanites who fled to Onidah and gathered themselves to the top of a hill called Antipas. The Lamanites who were on the hill resolved firmly not to go to war with the Nephites, but they made preparations to battle against Amalickiah and appointed a man named Lehonti to be their leader. Amalickiah did not want to fight against Lehonti's army, but he did want to gain command of all the armies.

8 Now it was not Amalickiah's intention to give them battle according to the commandments of the king; but behold, it was his intention to gain favor with the armies of the Lamanites, that he might place himself at their head and dethrone the king and take possession of the kingdom...

Amalickiah and his army camped around the hill and when night came, he sent a secret embassy up to Lehonti to request that he come down to speak with him. Lehonti refused to come down the hill to meet with Amalickiah to talk with him. After three total failed attempts to persuade Lehonti to come down, Amalickiah went up the hill almost to Lehonti's camp and once more asked Lehonti to come out and meet him and to bring his guards with him. This time Lehonti relented and brought his guards with him to meet with Amalickiah. Amalickiah then asked Lehonti if he would bring his

army back down and surround the king's loyal army in the camps below by night, Amalickiah would surrender his army to Lehonti if Lehonti made him second in command. Lehonti agreed and the army below awoke to discover that they had been surrounded.

15 And it came to pass that when they saw that they were surrounded, they pled with Amalickiah that he would suffer them to fall in with their brethren, that they might not be destroyed. Now this was the very thing which Amalickiah desired.

16 And it came to pass that he delivered his men, contrary to the commands of the king. Now this was the thing that Amalickiah desired, that he might accomplish his designs in dethroning the king.

17 Now it was the custom among the Lamanites, if their chief leader was killed, to appoint the second leader to be their chief leader.

18 And it came to pass that Amalickiah caused that one of his servants should administer poison by degrees to Lehonti, that he died.

19 Now, when Lehonti was dead, the Lamanites appointed Amalickiah to be their leader and their chief commander...

With Lehonti out of the way, Amalickiah took his armies and marched back to the Lamanite king who went out to greet them supposing that Amalickiah had gathered up an extraordinary army to go to battle against the Nephites.

22 But behold, as the king came out to meet him Amalickiah caused that his servants should go forth to meet the king. And they went and bowed themselves before the king, as if to reverence him because of his greatness.

23 And it came to pass that the king put forth his hand to raise them, as was the custom with the Lamanites, as a token of peace, which custom they had taken from the Nephites.

24 And it came to pass that when he had raised the first from the ground, behold he stabbed the king to the heart; and he fell to the earth.

25 Now the servants of the king fled; and the servants of Amalickiah raised a cry, saying:

26 Behold, the servants of the king have stabbed him to the heart, and he has fallen and they have fled; behold, come and see.

27 And it came to pass that Amalickiah commanded that his armies should march forth and see what had happened to the king; and when they had come to the spot, and found the king lying in his gore, Amalickiah pretended to be wroth, and said: Whosoever loved the king, let him go forth, and pursue his servants that they may be slain.

28 And it came to pass that all they who loved the king, when they heard these words, came forth and pursued after the servants of the king...

The servants who Amalickiah had framed, escaped and fled to Zarahemla, the Nephite city, and thereafter dwelt in peace with the converted Lamanites in Jershon. The Queen of the Lamanites, upon hearing of her husband's assassination, asked Amalickiah to spare the people of her city and asked him to inform her of how her husband died. Amalickiah then took his servant who killed the king and all who were with them and lied, testifying that the king's servants killed him and then fled.

35 And it came to pass that Amalickiah sought the favor of the queen, and took her unto him to wife; and

thus by his fraud, and by the assistance of his cunning servants, he obtained the kingdom; yea, he was acknowledged king throughout all the land, among all the people of the Lamanites, who were composed of the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites, and all the dissenters of the Nephites, from the reign of Nephi down to the present time.⁵

While Amalickiah was engaging in false flag operations and usurping power among the Lamanites, Captain Moroni was making preparations to defend his people from the coming invasion of King Amalickiah and all his Lamanite armies.

11 And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery;

12 Yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people.

13 Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood...

Captain Moroni had proven himself a faithful chief captain and defender of his people and also liberty. He fought only in defense of his country, never as an offense against those who would destroy his people and their new way of life. Furthermore, he spared his enemies when they covenanted to depart in peace or to maintain the liberty of his people even after they had shed so much of the blood of his

fellow Nephites or had attempted to overthrow the government and to supplant their judges, making themselves rulers. Neither Captain Moroni nor the Nephites desired to battle against the Lamanites to shed their blood.

23 Now, they were sorry to take up arms against the Lamanites, because they did not delight in the shedding of blood; yea, and this was not all—they were sorry to be the means of sending so many of their brethren out of this world into an eternal world, unprepared to meet their God.

24 Nevertheless, they could not suffer to lay down their lives, that their wives and their children should be massacred by the barbarous cruelty of those who were once their brethren, yea, and had dissented from their church, and had left them and had gone to destroy them by joining the Lamanites.⁶

Thereafter, the Lamanite armies returned and invaded the Nephite lands, but Captain Moroni had fortified his cities so well and had prepared his people for the attempted conquest of the Lamanite armies so well, that the Lamanites could not prevail whatsoever. But the Nephites had slain all the Lamanite chief captains instead. The Lamanites then returned to their land to report to King Amalickiah who had not gone to battle this time. When he learned of their failures and what had happened, he became enraged.

26 And it came to pass that he was exceedingly angry with his people, because he had not obtained his desire over the Nephites; he had not subjected them to the yoke of bondage.

27 Yea, he was exceedingly wroth, and he did curse God, and also Moroni, swearing with an oath that he would drink his blood; and this because Moroni had

kept the commandments of God in preparing for the safety of his people.⁷

Dissensions arose again among the Nephites as malcontents resumed their efforts to overthrow the government.

2 Nevertheless, they did not long maintain an entire peace in the land, for there began to be a contention among the people concerning the chief judge Pahoran; for behold, there were a part of the people who desired that a few particular points of the law should be altered.

3 But behold, Pahoran would not alter nor suffer the law to be altered; therefore, he did not hearken to those who had sent in their voices with their petitions concerning the altering of the law.

4 Therefore, those who were desirous that the law should be altered were angry with him, and desired that he should no longer be chief judge over the land; therefore there arose a warm dispute concerning the matter, but not unto bloodshed.

5 And it came to pass that those who were desirous that Pahoran should be dethroned from the judgment-seat were called king-men, for they were desirous that the law should be altered in a manner to overthrow the free government and to establish a king over the land.

6 And those who were desirous that Pahoran should remain chief judge over the land took upon them the name of freemen; and thus was the division among them, for the freemen had sworn or covenanted to maintain their rights and the privileges of their religion by a free government.

7 And it came to pass that this matter of their contention was settled by the voice of the people. And

it came to pass that the voice of the people came in favor of the freemen, and Pahoran retained the judgment-seat, which caused much rejoicing among the brethren of Pahoran and also many of the people of liberty, who also put the king-men to silence, that they durst not oppose but were obliged to maintain the cause of freedom.

8 Now those who were in favor of kings were those of high birth, and they sought to be kings; and they were supported by those who sought power and authority over the people.

9 But behold, this was a critical time for such contentions to be among the people of Nephi; for behold, Amalickiah had again stirred up the hearts of the people of the Lamanites against the people of the Nephites, and he was gathering together soldiers from all parts of his land, and arming them, and preparing for war with all diligence; for he had sworn to drink the blood of Moroni.⁸

Amalickiah had struck again. This time, he amassed such a great army that he did not fear to come to battle with them, and he returned with his armies at the head of them to the land of Zarahemla where he overthrew many cities and occupied them. The Nephite king-men rejoiced in this, having broken their oaths or covenants to defend the cause of freedom, but instead showing support for the conquering Lamanites because of their desires to be made rulers over the people. Captain Moroni, having been thwarted by the king-men at home, sought the voice of the people, to pull down the king-men because of their pride and nobility, and to level them down to the earth. The voice of the people granted Captain Moroni to do so, and he took his army to give battle to the king-men who raised their weapons against Captain Moroni and his men but were defeated and cut down instead. The leaders of the king-men had survived but were cast into prison

for lack of time to conduct a trial in the time of war. Because of the lack of unity among the Nephites, Amalickiah was able to take possession of many Nephite cities.

After many bloody campaigns against the Lamanite armies, one of which resulted in Amalickiah's death, and after Amalickiah's brother Ammoron succeeded him as king of the Lamanites, support from the Nephites to Captain Moroni and his armies waned. After an exchange of epistles with Chief Judge Pahoran, Captain Moroni learned that an insurgence of numerous king-men overthrew Pahoran and drove him and many other Nephites from Zarahemla and installed their own king by the name of Pachus. Pachus then sent an epistle to King Ammoron, informing him of his joining with him in an alliance in which he—Pachus—would maintain the city of Zarahemla in support of Ammoron's efforts to overthrow the remainder of the Nephite cities.

Captain Moroni then withdrew from the war with a number of his men and returned to retake Zarahemla. A battle ensued in which the king-men were defeated and Pachus was killed. Pahoran was restored to his seat as chief judge, and the remaining king-men were imprisoned and executed according to the law. Captain Moroni then returned to battle against the Lamanites, retook Nephite cities, and defeated Ammoron's armies, slaying Ammoron in the process. The Nephites succeeded in driving the remainder of the Lamanites from Nephite lands and began the process of refortifying their cities.

Peace was finally reestablished. Captain Moroni returned to his house, yielded up his armies to his son Moronihah, and resigned his commission as their chief captain so that he might spend the rest of his days in peace. There are so many remarkable events in this great decade-long war that could not be mentioned here as they are outside the scope of this subject matter. Please read Alma chapters 45

through 62 for the detailed account of the dissensions, wars, and miracles that were recorded in the Book of Mormon.

It is imperative to understand that by studying the wars recorded in the Book of Mormon, we can learn to understand the subtle methods used by men who seek to gain power in local, state, and national governments today. “And thus Amalickiah, by his fraud, gained the hearts of his people” (Alma 47:30). We can also learn how the Lord defends and protects His people, though they may be a tiny minority outnumbered by vast armies of enemies.

26 And it came to pass that the people of Nephi took their tents, and departed out of the valley of Gideon towards their city, which was the city of Zarahemla.

27 And behold, as they were crossing the river Sidon, the Lamanites and the Amlicites, being as numerous almost, as it were, as the sands of the sea, came upon them to destroy them.

28 Nevertheless, the Nephites being strengthened by the hand of the Lord, having prayed mightily to him that he would deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, therefore the Lord did hear their cries, and did strengthen them, and the Lamanites and the Amlicites did fall before them.⁹

But most importantly, by careful study of the Book of Mormon, we can identify the cunning devices employed by conspiring men who seek to overthrow our liberty and to avoid the same trappings and pitfalls that the Nephites fell into because of their pride, self-righteousness, and lack of diligence in maintaining their rights to be free and happy (Helaman 2:13-14). We must take their stories as a warning to try and prevent the same things from happening to us in America today. We might even be able to avoid our own destruction as a nation.

NOTES

1. *The Book of Mormon*, Mormon 9:30-31.
2. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 43.
3. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 44.
4. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 46.
5. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 47.
6. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 48.
7. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 49.
8. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 51.
9. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 2.

CHAPTER 6

BEFRIENDING THE CONSTITUTION

Captain Moroni was not a statesman, nor was he a pacifist. He was a simple man who valued the principles of liberty and self-government, and who was willing to lay down his life for this cause. He valued life so much that he willingly allowed his enemies to go free by trusting them to keep their word, which many did not.

11 And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery;

12 Yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people.

13 Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath to defend his

people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood.

14 Now the Nephites were taught to defend themselves against their enemies, even to the shedding of blood if it were necessary; yea, and they were also taught never to give an offense, yea, and never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives.

15 And this was their faith, that by so doing God would prosper them in the land, or in other words, if they were faithful in keeping the commandments of God that he would prosper them in the land; yea, warn them to flee, or to prepare for war, according to their danger;

16 And also, that God would make it known unto them whither they should go to defend themselves against their enemies, and by so doing, the Lord would deliver them; and this was the faith of Moroni, and his heart did glory in it; not in the shedding of blood but in doing good, in preserving his people, yea, in keeping the commandments of God, yea, and resisting iniquity.¹

The Nephites understood the non-aggression principle. In contrast with pacifism, they were taught that forcible defense is justifiable. This same principle was taught to the Latter-day Saints in Joseph Smith's day through a revelation, which the Lord gave to Joseph in response to the persecution, which they had experienced in Missouri in 1833. This revelation and admonition is found in the ninety-eighth section of the Doctrine & Covenants and is of such great importance that it must in its entirety be quoted here. Brief commentary has been inserted at key points:

1 Verily I say unto you my friends, fear not, let your hearts be comforted; yea, rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks;

2 Waiting patiently on the Lord, for your prayers have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded with this seal and testament—the Lord hath sworn and decreed that they shall be granted.

3 Therefore, he giveth this promise unto you, with an immutable covenant that they shall be fulfilled; and all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory, saith the Lord.

4 And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them.

5 And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me.

6 Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land;

7 And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil...

The United States Constitution is the law of the land, which the Lord granted the Latter-day Saints to obey, honor, and sustain, so long as their presidents, rulers, and magistrates likewise uphold it. But presidents, senators, and elected representatives do not always obey, honor, and sustain the Constitution. Many have it in their hearts to change and to corrupt the law for their benefit, hence coming from evil. Founding Father James Madison wrote:

If it be asked, what is to restrain the House of Representatives from making legal discriminations in favor of themselves and a particular class of society? I answer: the genius of the whole system; the nature of just and constitutional laws; and, above all, the vigilant and manly spirit which actuates the people of America—a spirit which nourishes freedom, and is nourished by it. If this spirit shall ever be so far debased as to tolerate a law not obligatory on the legislature, as well as on the people, the people will be prepared to tolerate anything but liberty. Such will be the relation between the House of Representatives and their constituents.”²

This applies as well to local and state elected officials such as governors, state senators, and state legislators. All are duty-bound to uphold their oaths of office to support and defend the Constitution against all foreign and domestic enemies.

8 I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free.

9 Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn.

10 Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil.

11 And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.

12 For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith.

13 And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal.

14 Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy.

15 For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me.

16 Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children...

God does not mince words. He does not condone aggression. Instead, He expects His covenant people to love their enemies, to bless their enemies that curse them, and to pray for their enemies which persecute them. But God did not grant to us our liberty to squander it on vain pursuits, idleness, and speculations (investments) to elevate ourselves above others. He expects us to abide in our covenant even unto death. Serving Mammon instead of God is not forsaking all evil. Instead, it props up and expands Babylon. Hugh Nibley wrote:

Elders of Israel are greedy after the things of this world. If you ask them if they are ready to build up the kingdom of God, their answer is prompt—"Why, to be sure we are, with our whole souls; but we want first to get so much gold, speculate and get rich, and then we can help the church considerably. We will go to California and get gold, go and buy goods and get rich, trade with the emigrants, build a mill, make a farm, get a large herd of cattle, and then we can do a great deal for Israel."

I have heard this many times from friends and relatives, but it is hokum. What they are saying is, “If God will give me a million dollars, I will let him have a generous cut of it.” And so they pray and speculate and expect the Lord to come through for them. He won’t do it: “And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thine own property” (D&C 19:26). “Let them repent of all their sins, and of all their covetous desires, before me, saith the Lord; for what is property unto me? saith the Lord” (D&C 117:4). He does not need our property or our help.

Every rhetorician knows that his most effective weapons by far are *labels*. He can demolish the opposition with simple and devastating labels such as communism, socialism, or atheism, popery, militarism, or Mormonism, or give his clients’ worst crimes a religious glow with noble labels such as integrity, old-fashioned honesty, tough-mindedness, or free competitive enterprise. “You can get away with anything if you just wave the flag,” a business partner of my father once told me. He called that patriotism. But the label game reaches its all-time peak of skill and effrontery in the Madison Avenue master stroke of pasting the lovely label of Zion on all the most typical institutions of Babylon: Zion’s Loans, Zion’s Real Estate, Zion’s Used Cars, Zion’s Jewelry, Zion’s Supermart, Zion’s Auto Wrecking, Zion’s Outdoor Advertising, Zion’s Gunshop, Zion’s Land and Mining, Zion’s Development, Zion’s Securities—all that is *quintessentially Babylon now masquerades as Zion.*”³

Furthermore, renouncing war and proclaiming peace is paramount in seeking to establish the cause of Zion, which Isaiah foresaw established in the last days. God does not necessarily want religious people performing rote duties. He wants to redeem them—to bring them out of the world and back into His presence as He did with Enoch and his people (Genesis 5:22-24). This was His intention in freeing the ancient Israelites from Egypt’s rule (Exodus 19&20). This was His intention with the Latter-day Saints through Joseph Smith (D&C 101), and this is His intention before He returns to rule and to reign in glory on the Earth. Spencer W. Kimball explained:

In spite of our delight in defining ourselves as modern, and our tendency to think we possess a sophistication that no people in the past ever had—in spite of these things, we are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord. We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan’s counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior’s teaching: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.”⁴

We ought to become devoted disciples of Jesus Christ by doing all the things He said to do in His sermon on the mount during His mortal ministry.

17 And again, the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets, and the prophets unto the Jews; lest I come and smite the whole earth with a curse, and all flesh be consumed before me.

18 Let not your hearts be troubled; for in my Father's house are many mansions, and I have prepared a place for you; and where my Father and I am, there ye shall be also.

19 Behold, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with many who are in the church at Kirtland;

20 For they do not forsake their sins, and their wicked ways, the pride of their hearts, and their covetousness, and all their detestable things, and observe the words of wisdom and eternal life which I have given unto them.

21 Verily I say unto you, that I, the Lord, will chasten them and will do whatsoever I list, if they do not repent and observe all things whatsoever I have said unto them.

22 And again I say unto you, if ye observe to do whatsoever I command you, I, the Lord, will turn away all wrath and indignation from you, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

23 Now, I speak unto you concerning your families— if men will smite you, or your families, once, and ye bear it patiently and revile not against them, neither seek revenge, ye shall be rewarded;

24 But if ye bear it not patiently, it shall be accounted unto you as being meted out as a just measure unto you.

25 And again, if your enemy shall smite you the second time, and you revile not against your enemy, and bear it patiently, your reward shall be an hundred-fold.

26 And again, if he shall smite you the third time, and ye bear it patiently, your reward shall be doubled unto you four-fold;

27 And these three testimonies shall stand against your enemy if he repent not, and shall not be blotted out.

28 And now, verily I say unto you, if that enemy shall escape my vengeance, that he be not brought into judgment before me, then ye shall see to it that ye warn him in my name, that he come no more upon you, neither upon your family, even your children's children unto the third and fourth generation.

29 And then, if he shall come upon you or your children, or your children's children unto the third and fourth generation, I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands;

30 And then if thou wilt spare him, thou shalt be rewarded for thy righteousness; and also thy children and thy children's children unto the third and fourth generation.

31 Nevertheless, thine enemy is in thine hands; and if thou rewardest him according to his works thou art justified; if he has sought thy life, and thy life is endangered by him, thine enemy is in thine hands and thou art justified.

32 Behold, *this is the law I gave unto my servant Nephi, and thy fathers, Joseph, and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, and all mine ancient prophets and apostles...*

It is not difficult to conceive the notion that Nephi likewise gave this law to his successors who appointed men like Captain Moroni to defend his people and their liberty, so that they may worship God freely. When Nephi fabricated many swords for his people, it was not to pillage and to plunder, nor was it to defend to the death their riches. His sole purpose in preparing for war was for the defense of his people against the Lamanites who continually sought to destroy them. Nephi never intended his people to engage in offensive wars.

33 And again, this is the law that I gave unto mine ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them.

34 And if any nation, tongue, or people should proclaim war against them, they should first lift a standard of peace unto that people, nation, or tongue;

35 And if that people did not accept the offering of peace, neither the second nor the third time, they should bring these testimonies before the Lord;

36 Then I, the Lord, would give unto them a commandment, and justify them in going out to battle against that nation, tongue, or people.

37 And I, the Lord, would fight their battles, and their children's battles, and their children's children's, until they had avenged themselves on all their enemies, to the third and fourth generation.

38 Behold, this is an ensample unto all people, saith the Lord your God, for justification before me.

39 And again, verily I say unto you, if after thine enemy has come upon thee the first time, he repent and come unto thee praying thy forgiveness, thou shalt forgive him, and shalt hold it no more as a testimony against thine enemy—

40 And so on unto the second and third time; and as oft as thine enemy repenteth of the trespass wherewith he has trespassed against thee, thou shalt forgive him, until seventy times seven.

41 And if he trespass against thee and repent not the first time, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him.

42 And if he trespass against thee the second time, and repent not, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him.

43 And if he trespass against thee the third time, and repent not, thou shalt also forgive him.

44 But if he trespass against thee the fourth time thou shalt not forgive him, but shalt bring these testimonies before the Lord; and they shall not be blotted out until he repent and reward thee four-fold in all things wherewith he has trespassed against thee.

45 And if he do this, thou shalt forgive him with all thine heart; and if he do not this, I, the Lord, will avenge thee of thine enemy an hundred-fold;

46 And upon his children, and upon his children's children of all them that hate me, unto the third and fourth generation.

47 But if the children shall repent, or the children's children, and turn to the Lord their God, with all their hearts and with all their might, mind, and strength, and restore four-fold for all their trespasses wherewith they have trespassed, or wherewith their fathers have trespassed, or their fathers' fathers, then thine indignation shall be turned away;

48 And vengeance shall no more come upon them, saith the Lord thy God, and their trespasses shall never be brought any more as a testimony before the Lord against them. Amen.⁵

Jesus Christ was born into this world to suffer His Father's will. He became the standard that everyone should emulate. All serious disciples of Jesus Christ today should likewise be willing to suffer His will, turning the other cheek, forgiving seventy times seven, and blessing their enemies. Latter-day Saints should not use the war chapters of the Book of Mormon to justify supporting the troops who engage in unconstitutional wars. It is important to learn from the example of Captain Moroni and all those who fought with him in defense and *only* in defense of their freedom, religion, peace, wives, and their children at home. The Lord declared in verse thirty-eight above that what He declared was an "ensample" unto all people, not just the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

5 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; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest; at the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience.⁶

Unless we are "protected in our inherent and inalienable rights," we are not obligated to sustain and uphold a corrupt government or its unconstitutional laws. But we now live in perilous times when our liberty and our inalienable rights are being stripped away piecemeal, or rather, many of us are voluntarily surrendering our rights to despots who are pretending to keep us safe. We have a moral obligation to prevent this encroaching tyranny before we find ourselves utterly unable to peacefully resist. But while most of us are not appointed to be defenders of peace by the sword like Captain

Moroni, it is regardless incumbent upon us to be vigilant defenders and preservers of liberty. If it were so, despots and king-men would have no chance to take public office, whether national or local.

17 Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men.⁷

For the reader unfamiliar with the Book of Mormon, it should be noted that Captain Moroni is not the same Moroni, the son of Mormon who abridged the entire record. The prophet-historian Mormon seemed so impressed with Captain Moroni that he gave his son the same name to encourage him to keep in remembrance his duty to his God and his people. Moroni, the son of Mormon, at the end of the record, exhorts the reader to be wiser than they were. Because of the failures of the peoples in the Book of Mormon to ultimately maintain their liberty, we are given a great warning:

20 And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites.

21 And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi.

22 And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not.

23 Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.

24 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; or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up.

25 For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning.

26 Wherefore, I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved.⁸

It has often been said that the only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. It can be argued that it was not only the materialistic and covetous Nephites who sought wealth and comfort that supported the Gadianton robbers in their quest for power, but it was also the slothful Nephites, too preoccupied with their personal lives that allowed evil to overthrow their entire nation. Although they were once prosperous people favored of the Lord, it was through their disobedience to Him and also their indolence that led to their extinction.

38...The Nephites did build [the Gadianton robbers] up and support them, beginning at the more wicked part of them, until they had overspread all the land of the Nephites, and had seduced the more part of the righteous until they had come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils, and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations.

39 And thus they did obtain the sole management of the government, insomuch that they did trample under their feet and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God...⁹

4 And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats—having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God, and not in the least aright before him; doing no justice unto the children of men;

5 Condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get

gain and glory of the world, and, moreover, that they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills...¹⁰

Charles Nibley explained almost a century ago, paraphrasing Joseph Smith, that the time would come when, through secret organizations taking the law into their own hands and not being governed by law or even by due process of law, but becoming a law unto themselves, that:

The Constitution of the United States would be so torn and rent asunder, and life and property and peace and security would be held of so little value, that the Constitution would, as it were, hang by a thread. But he never said, so far as I have heard, that that thread would be cut. I believe, with Elder Richards, that this Constitution will be preserved, but it will be preserved very largely in consequence of what the Lord has revealed and what this people, through listening to the Lord and being obedient, will help to bring about, to stabilize and give permanency and effect to the Constitution itself. That also is our mission.¹¹

NOTES

1. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 48.
2. James Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 57 (New American Library, 1961), p. 353.
3. Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (Deseret Book Company, 1989), pp. 53-54, emphasis added.
4. Spencer W. Kimball, *The False Gods We Worship*, Ensign Magazine (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, June 1976).
5. *The Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 98, emphasis added.
6. *The Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 134, emphasis added.
7. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 48.
8. *The Book of Mormon*, Ether 8.
9. *The Book of Mormon*, Helaman 6.
10. *The Book of Mormon*, Helaman 7.
11. Charles W. Nibley, *Ninety-fourth Semi-Annual Conference*, October 1923, p. 62.

CHAPTER 7

A SELECTION OF QUOTATIONS

On July 19, 1840, when Joseph Smith spoke about the redemption of Zion, referring to the Doctrine and Covenants in the one hundred first section, he prophesied:

Even this nation will be on the verge of crumbling to pieces and tumbling to the ground and when the Constitution is on the brink of ruin this people will be the staff upon which the nation shall lean and they shall bear the Constitution away from the very verge of destruction.¹

James Burgess, who immigrated to Nauvoo, Illinois, kept a journal of his missionary travels, and also recorded some of Joseph Smith's teachings, related an address given by Joseph to the Nauvoo Legion on May 1843 saying:

The time would come when the Constitution and the government would hang by a brittle thread and would be ready to fall into other hands but this people

the Latter-day Saints will step forth and save it.²

On January 3, 1858, Orson Hyde delivered a discourse in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle where he said:

Brother Joseph in his lifetime declared that the Elders of this church should step forth at a particular time when the Constitution should be in danger, and rescue it, and save it. This may be so; but I do not recollect that he said exactly so. I believe he said something like this—that the time would come when the Constitution and the country would be in danger of an overthrow; and said he, if the Constitution be saved at all, it will be by the Elders of this church. I believe this is about the language, as nearly as I can recollect it. The question is whether it will be saved at all, or not. I do not know that it matters to us whether it is or not: the Lord will provide for and take care of his people, if we do every duty, and fear and honor him, and keep his commandments; and he will not leave us without a Constitution.³

Eliza R. Snow, the second General President of the Relief Society and Lorenzo Snow's sister, said during an Ogden Pioneer Day celebration in 1871:

I heard the prophet say, "The time will come when the government of these United States will be so nearly overthrown through its corruption, that the Constitution will hang as it were by a single hair, and the Latter-day Saints—the Elders of Israel—will step forward to its rescue and save it."⁴

Brigham Young delivered a discourse in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle on the fourth of July, 1854, saying:

Will the Constitution be destroyed? No: it will be held inviolate by this people; and, as Joseph Smith said, “The time will come when the destiny of the nation will hang upon a single thread. At that critical juncture, this people will step forth and save it from the threatened destruction.” It will be so. With regard to the doings of our fathers and the Constitution of the United States, I have to say, they present to us a glorious prospect in the future, but one we cannot attain to until the present abuses in the government are corrected.⁵

Many other leaders of the church have spoken in support of the United States Constitution and have emphasized the importance of upholding it. On April 9, 1882, President John Taylor asked:

Cannot the people of this nation afford to listen to the principles of truth, and allow men who are fearing God to assemble together to worship Him according to the dictates of their own consciences? Have we violated any law of the United States in thus gathering together and in thus worshiping our God? Not that I know of. Have we been opposed to the United States? No! no! no! We never have, and we are at the defiance of all men to prove anything of the kind. There are falsehoods set afoot by low, degraded, unprincipled men.

We believe that the Constitution of the United States was given by inspiration of God. And why? Because it is one of those instruments which

proclaims liberty throughout the land, and to all the inhabitants thereof. And it was because of those noble sentiments, and the promulgation of those principles which were given by God to man, we believe that it was given by the inspiration of the Almighty. We have always esteemed it in this light, and it was so declared by Joseph Smith. Did we do any wrong in coming here in the way we did? I think not. Did we transgress any of the laws of the United States? I think not. Did we transgress any of the laws of the nations we left? I think not. We gathered together simply because we were told there was a Zion to be built up. And what was that Zion? The term means the pure in heart.⁶

Wilford Woodruff gave a discourse in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle on July 19, 1868, saying:

A great deal has been said about the form of government, and the constitution under which we live. They have been the praise of all Americans, and perhaps of people living in other portions of the earth. We consider that we have been blessed as a nation in possessing the freedom and privileges guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. They have been a rich legacy from our fathers. We consider our form of government superior to any other on the earth. It guarantees to us “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

And while the inhabitants of many other governments have been tyrannically bound up, and their minds controlled in certain channels, and they have been deprived of the right of liberty of speech

and of many other rights called by freemen, ours had guaranteed unto us all the liberty that can be enjoyed by man. Still, I have many times thought that we, as American Citizens, have not prized the gifts and blessings guaranteed to us by the Constitution of our country. For the last few years, especially the Constitution, at times, has been looked upon as a matter of the smallest consequence. In some respects, however, it has been a blessing to us as a people, and it is to the whole nation, as far as it is carried out. But in order to fully receive its blessings we have to honor its precepts.⁷

Lorenzo Snow declared over the pulpit on January 14, 1872:

We look upon George Washington, the father of our country, as an inspired instrument of the Almighty; we can see the all-inspiring Spirit operating upon him. And upon his co-workers in resisting oppression, and in establishing the thirteen colonies as a confederacy; and then again the workings of the same Spirit upon those men who established the constitution of the United States. In a revelation contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants the Lord says: “And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land by the hands of wise men, whom I raised up unto this very purpose.” We see the hand of the Lord in these things.⁸

From Joseph F. Smith, we read:

I believe in the Constitution of the United States. I believe in the principles which that instrument

promulgates—the freedom of mankind to do right, to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, freedom to pursue their way in peace and to observe and maintain their rights, their freedom, their liberties, and justly recognize and equally preserve and defend their rights, freedom and liberty of their neighbors and of their fellow beings—and of all God’s creatures. I believe that the Constitution of the United States was and still is an inspired instrument. The Lord God Almighty inspired the minds that framed it, and I believe it ought to be most sacredly preserved. It is worthy of the defense and should be upheld by all the people of our land.⁹

Before he died in 1945, Heber J. Grant gave us a warning:

We again warn our people in America of the constantly increasing threat against our inspired Constitution and our free institutions set up under it. The same political tenets and philosophies that have brought war and terror in other parts of the world are at work amongst us in America. The proponents thereof are seeking to undermine our own form of government and to set up instead one of the forms of dictatorships now flourishing in other lands...Communism and all other similar *isms* bear no relationship whatever to the United Order. They are merely the clumsy counterfeits which Satan always devises of the gospel plan...Latter-day Saints cannot be true to their faith and lend aid, encouragement, or sympathy to any of these false philosophies. They will prove snares to their feet.¹⁰

George Albert Smith wrote:

No nation in the world has a constitution that was given to it by our Heavenly Father except the United States of America. I wonder if we appreciate that. The Lord gave us a rule of life for this great nation, and as far as we have lived up to it and taken advantage of it, the nation has grown, and the people have been blessed. But there are many people who prefer, or at least they seem to prefer, something else.

As one man said to me, “Why not try what Russia has tried and Germany has tried?” And my answer to him was, “Why try something that has already failed? Why not hold on to what the Lord has given?” The Constitution of the United States was written, it is true, by men, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and others who were their associates, but we have in this book that I have in my hand, the book of Doctrine and Covenants, a revelation in which the Lord tells us that the Constitution of the United States was prepared by men raised up by him for this very purpose. As Latter-day Saints we ought to know that there is nothing better anywhere else. And so we should cleave to the Constitution of the United States and in doing so, earn the blessings of our Heavenly Father.¹¹

From David O. McKay, we read:

It is a part of our “Mormon” theology that the Constitution of the United States was divinely inspired; that our Republic came into existence through wise men raised up for that very purpose. We

believe it is the duty of the members of the Church to see that this Republic is not subverted either by any sudden or constant erosion of those principles which gave this Nation its birth. In these days when there is a special trend among certain groups, including members of faculties of universities, to challenge the principles upon which our country has been founded and the philosophy of our Founding Fathers, I hope that Brigham Young University will stand as a bulwark in support of the principles of government as vouchsafed to us by our Constitutional Fathers.¹²

In 1936, Joseph Fielding Smith wrote a book in which he stated:

Under the “Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union between the States,” the union had no President, no supreme court, and consisted of one house of congress made up of delegates elected by the legislatures of the states, whose jurisdiction was greatly limited. There were so many defects and restrictions in the Federation that the wise men in the nation readily perceived that something more nearly perfect, more powerful and binding upon the colonies, was necessary if the union was to be preserved...The Constitution is the greatest document, so far as we know, ever adopted by organized society for their government, outside of the kingdom of God. It furnishes the nation a system of checks and balances for their protection so that any one department of the government, cannot, without losing its sacred foundations, be overcome or subordinated by another.¹³

Harold B. Lee said:

To the membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Constitution of the United States is as a tree of liberty under whose cooling branches one might find a haven from the scorching sun of turmoil and oppression and have his rights protected according to just and holy principles. To them, the Constitution was established by the hands of wise men whom God raised up for this very purpose, and they devoutly believe that if it should be in danger of being overthrown, their lives, if need be, are to be offered in defense of its principles (D&C 101:77–80).¹⁴

In 1982, Spencer W. Kimball addressed the church, saying:

President Ronald Reagan has proclaimed the week beginning Sept. 17 (the 195th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution of Sept. 17, 1787) as Constitution Week and has urged all Americans to observe that week by stressing the importance of the Constitution to our individual freedoms and form of government. In view of this proclamation and because of the high esteem in which the Constitution has been held by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith, we encourage leaders and members of the Church in the United States to heed President Reagan's proclamation and during this week to remember with appreciation before the Lord the great blessings of liberty and opportunity which are guaranteed to the citizens of the United States. The First Presidency.¹⁵

Ezra Taft Benson was very outspoken about liberty, the Constitution, and threats to the United States, not from foreign enemies, but domestic. At a BYU devotional in 1952, he said:

I don't know how you feel, my brethren and sisters, but I'd rather be dead than to lose my liberty. I have no fear we'll ever lose it because of invasion from the outside. But I do have fear that it may slip away from us because of our own indifference, our own negligence, as citizens of this land. And so I plead with you this morning that you take an active interest in matters pertaining to the future of this country.¹⁶

On October of 1987, Ezra Taft Benson spoke in General Conference explaining:

How then can we best befriend the Constitution in this critical hour and secure the blessings of liberty and ensure the protection and guidance of our Father in Heaven? *First and foremost, we must be righteous.* John Adams said, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." (*The Works of John Adams*, ed. C. F. Adams, Boston: Little, Brown Co., 1851, 4:31). If the Constitution is to have continuance, this American nation, and especially the Latter-day Saints, must be virtuous...Two great American Christian civilizations—the Jaredites and the Nephites—were swept off this land because they did not "serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ" (Ether 2:12). What will become of our civilization? *Second, we*

must learn the principles of the Constitution in the tradition of the Founding Fathers. Have we read *The Federalist* papers? Are we reading the Constitution and pondering it? Are we aware of its principles? Are we abiding by these principles and teaching them to others? Could we defend the Constitution? Can we recognize when a law is constitutionally unsound? Do we know what the prophets have said about the Constitution and the threats to it? As Jefferson said, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free ... it expects what never was and never will be.” (*Letter to Colonel Charles Yancey*, 6 Jan. 1816)...

We must become accurately informed and then let others know how we feel. The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “It is our duty to concentrate all our influence to make popular that which is sound and good, and unpopular that which is unsound. Tis right, politically, for a man who has influence to use it. ... From henceforth I will maintain all the influence I can get.” (*History of the Church*, vol.5, p. 286). I have faith that the Constitution will be saved as prophesied by Joseph Smith. It will be saved by the righteous citizens of this nation who love and cherish freedom. It will be saved by enlightened members of this Church—among others—men and women who understand and abide the principles of the Constitution. I reverence the Constitution of the United States as a sacred document. To me its words are akin to the revelations of God, for God has placed His stamp of approval upon it. I testify that the God of heaven sent some of His choicest spirits to lay the foundation of this government, and He has now sent other choice spirits to help preserve it. We, the

blessed beneficiaries of the Constitution, face difficult days in America, “a land which is choice above all other lands” (Ether 2:10). May God give us the faith and the courage exhibited by those patriots who pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. May we be equally as valiant and as free, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.¹⁷

On March 8, 1966, Howard W. Hunter spoke the following words at BYU:

What is the real cause of this trend toward the welfare state, toward more socialism? In the last analysis, in my judgment, it is personal unrighteousness. When people do not use their freedoms responsibly and righteously, they will gradually lose these freedoms...If man will not recognize the inequalities around him and voluntarily, through the gospel plan, come to the aid of his brother, he will find that through “a democratic process” he will be forced to come to the aid of his brother. The government will take from the “haves” and give to the “have nots.” Both have lost their freedom. Those who “have,” lost their freedom to give voluntarily of their own free will and in the way they desire. Those who “have not,” lost their freedom because they did not earn what they received. They got “something for nothing,” and they will neither appreciate the gift nor the giver of the gift. Under this climate, people gradually become blind to what has happened and to the vital freedoms which they have lost.¹⁸

Gordon B. Hinckley gave an address at WSU, saying in part:

[The Constitution] is the keystone of our nation. It is the guarantee of our liberty. That original document, with the Bill of Rights, constitutes the charter of our freedom. Through all of the years that have followed we have had some ambitious men who have sought to subvert the great principles of the Constitution, but somehow we have endured one crisis after another. We have been involved in terrible wars during this, the bloodiest of all centuries in the history of man. All of this is part of the miracle that is America, the struggle, the travail, the bitterness, the jealousies, the cynicism, and the criticism. But beyond and above it all is the wonder of a nation that for more than two centuries has remained free and independent and strong, the envy of the world, the hope of the world, the protection of free men everywhere, the manifestation of the power of the Almighty.¹⁹

For two decades, church leaders were predominantly silent about this subject until just recently when Dallin H. Oaks spoke in the April 2021 General Conference where he said:

A constitution is the foundation of government. It provides structure and limits for the exercise of government powers. The United States Constitution is the oldest written constitution still in force today. Though originally adopted by only a small number of colonies, it soon became a model worldwide. Today, every nation except three have adopted written constitutions...

I believe the United States Constitution contains at least five divinely inspired principles. First is the principle that the source of government power is the people. In a time when sovereign power was universally assumed to come from the divine right of kings or from military power, attributing sovereign power to the people was revolutionary. Philosophers had advocated this, but the United States Constitution was the first to apply it. Sovereign power in the people does *not* mean that mobs or other groups of people can intervene to intimidate or force government action. The Constitution established a constitutional democratic republic, where the people exercise their power through their elected representatives.

A second inspired principle is the division of delegated power between the nation and its subsidiary states. In our federal system, this unprecedented principle has sometimes been altered by inspired amendments, such as those abolishing slavery and extending voting rights to women, mentioned earlier. Significantly, the United States Constitution limits the national government to the exercise of powers granted expressly or by implication, and it reserves all other government powers “to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Another inspired principle is the separation of powers. Well over a century before our 1787 Constitutional Convention, the English Parliament pioneered the separation of legislative and executive authority when they wrested certain powers from the king. The inspiration in the American convention was

to delegate *independent* executive, legislative, and judicial powers so these three branches could exercise checks upon one another.

A fourth inspired principle is in the cluster of vital guarantees of individual rights and specific limits on government authority in the Bill of Rights, adopted by amendment just three years after the Constitution went into force. A Bill of Rights was not new. Here the inspiration was in the practical implementation of principles pioneered in England, beginning with the Magna Carta. The writers of the Constitution were familiar with these because some of the colonial charters had such guarantees.

Without a Bill of Rights, America could not have served as the host nation for the Restoration of the gospel, which began just three decades later. There was divine inspiration in the original provision that there should be no religious test for public office, but the addition of the religious freedom and antiestablishment guarantees in the First Amendment was vital. We also see divine inspiration in the First Amendment's freedoms of speech and press and in the personal protections in other amendments, such as for criminal prosecutions.

Fifth and finally, I see divine inspiration in the vital purpose of the entire Constitution. We are to be governed by *law* and not by *individuals*, and our loyalty is to *the Constitution* and its principles and processes, not to any *office holder*. In this way, all persons are to be equal before the law. These principles block the autocratic ambitions that have

corrupted democracy in some countries. They also mean that none of the three branches of government should be dominant over the others or prevent the others from performing their proper constitutional functions to check one another...

The stature of the Constitution is diminished by efforts to substitute current societal trends as the reason for its founding, instead of liberty and self-government. The authority of the Constitution is trivialized when candidates or officials ignore its principles. The dignity and force of the Constitution is reduced by those who refer to it like a loyalty test or a political slogan, instead of its lofty status as a source of authorization for and limits on government authority...

Our belief in divine inspiration gives Latter-day Saints a unique responsibility to uphold and defend the United States Constitution and principles of constitutionalism wherever we live. We should trust in the Lord and be positive about this nation's future.²⁰

NOTES

1. *Joseph Smith Papers*, LDS Church Historical Archives, Box 1, March 10, 1844.
2. *James Burgess Journal*, 1818–1904, Church Archives, vol. 1.
3. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, p.152.
4. *Journal History*, MSF 143 #28, July 24, 1871.
5. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, p. 15.
6. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 23, p. 53.
7. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 12, p. 275.
8. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 14, p. 304.
9. *Thrift and Economy*, pp. 634–35.
10. *Grant and McKay*, pp. 273, 343.
11. *Liberty Under the Constitution*, p. 964.
12. *Letter to Ernest L. Wilkinson 2*.
13. *The Progress of Man*, pp. 293, 295–96.
14. *True Patriotism 2*; revised in *Ye Are the Light of the World*, p.176.
15. *First Presidency Urges Support of Constitution Week*, 4.
16. *The LDS Church and Politics*, BYU Devotional, December 1, 1952.
17. *Our Divine Constitution*, Saturday Morning Session, October 1987.
18. Speeches of the Year 1965-1966, pp. 1-11, *The Law of the Harvest*, Devotional Address, Brigham Young University, 8 March 1966.
19. *Keep Faith with America*, Weber State University commencement address, Ogden, Utah, May 6, 1999.
20. *Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution*, April 2021 General Conference.

CHAPTER 8

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Is liberty really essential? Maybe the Constitution is outdated and obsolete! What's wrong with a government that wants to keep us safe? We should just trust our leaders, right? From George Orwell's book, *1984*, we read the following excerpt where the main character Winston is being tortured and questioned by O'Brien, a member of INGSOC's inner party. Winston had been caught in the act of independent thought and behavior:

“I don't know—I don't care. Somehow you will fail. Something will defeat you. Life will defeat you.”

“We control life, Winston, at all its levels. You are imagining that there is something called human nature which will be outraged by what we do and will turn against us. But we create human nature. Men are infinitely malleable. Or perhaps you have returned to your old idea that the proletarians or the slaves will arise and overthrow us. Put it out of your mind. They are helpless, like the animals. Humanity is the Party. The others are outside—irrelevant.”

“I don't care. In the end they will beat you. Sooner or later they will see you for what you are, and then they will tear you to pieces.”

“Do you see any evidence that this is happening? Or any reason why it should?”

“No. I believe it. I know that you will fail. There is something in the universe—I don't know, some spirit, some principle—that you will never overcome.”

“Do you believe in God, Winston?”

“No.”

“Then what is it, this principle that will defeat us?”

“I don't know. The spirit of Man.”

“And do you consider yourself a man?”

“Yes.”

“If you are a man, Winston, you are the last man. Your kind is extinct; we are the inheritors. Do you understand that you are alone? You are outside history, you are non-existent.”¹

O'Brien then ordered Winston to remove all his clothing and look at himself in a three-sided mirror across the room. To his horror, Winston saw someone that he did not recognize: a figure of a man reduced to skin and bones, whose hair could be removed by a simple grasp of a tuft, and who was so emaciated that O'Brien's thumb and forefinger could meet around his frail bicep. He was grimy, filthy, and smelled so awful that he had to wonder how long he had been held captive. One can summarize this story in a single phrase, one which O'Brien had succinctly explained to Winston during his torture, “If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever...and remember that it is forever. The face will always be there to be stamped upon.”

While O'Brien was well educated and knew about God, whatever he believed about God was irrelevant. INGSOC was God. That is all

that mattered. The fact that Winston did not believe in God in the story is noteworthy. Oceania, where the story is set, may as well be a Godless society. But what was their atheistic moral compass? They had none. The spirit of man without God in the story proved to be self-destructive.

Karl Marx considered religion to be nothing more than the opium of the masses. The communist hatred of faith is a feature, not a fault. Since the days of Marx, the communist goal has been the creation of a “new man.” The communist Chinese re-education camps in Xinjiang have employed political brainwashing of millions of Uyghur Muslims intending to make them suitable for the Chinese socialist system. Tibetan monks regularly face arrest, imprisonment, or death. Christians are being detained and forced to renounce their faith or be tortured. Falun Gong practitioners have their organs forcibly harvested for the benefit of party leaders. But what exactly is communism? Or better yet, what is the communism of Mao Tse-tung? What is the communism of Ho Chi Minh? Or Fidel Castro or Marshal Tito?

In keeping with the fact that almost everybody seems to have his own definition of Communism, we are going to give you ours, and then we will attempt to prove to you that it is the only valid one. Communism: AN INTERNATIONAL, CONSPIRATORIAL DRIVE FOR POWER ON THE PART OF MEN IN HIGH PLACES WILLING TO USE ANY MEANS TO BRING ABOUT THEIR DESIRED AIM—GLOBAL CONQUEST.²

Why does it matter whether the term is communism, socialism, fascism, or even capitalism when the desired result of the conspiring few is totalitarianism? Why does it matter whether it originates from the far left or the far right when the conspiring few use both sides to

obtain their desired result of absolute control? In Orwell's *1984*, it can be argued that all the proletarians were atheists because all the practitioners of faith had already been slaughtered wholesale. The rest were easy pickings. But we are operating on the premise and understanding that there is a God and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to Earth on a rescue mission, and whose unimpeachable character and attributes offer us a clear view of what a heavenly being looks like. For any believer to be saved as a heavenly being requires that he or she becomes exactly like Him, nothing less, and nothing more. But to become like Him requires that we freely surrender ourselves. It means voluntarily giving up all our worldly ways—all our materialistic, covetous, lustful, greedy, oppressive, despotic, carnal, devilish attributes—and take upon ourselves His Godly attributes and His character.

To be like Jesus Christ is to be someone who exercises no control over anyone else's freedom to act and to make choices. Instead of forcing us to do good or to be good, He says, "***If*** you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15, emphasis added). He is persuading us to love Him by *becoming* like Him. This is because all heavenly people are also like Him. Thus keeping His commandments teaches us to be like He is, which is a being who does not lie, steal, covet, lust, murder, etc. There is a vast difference between simply doing something and becoming someone whose character motivates him or her to do it. His two greatest commandments cover all others, for if we love someone as Jesus does, we would forever pose no threat of harm whatsoever to another person in any way, shape, or form because we are motivated purely by Christlike love. Furthermore, if we love as Jesus loves, we would be willing to sacrifice as He did, even to the laying down of our lives for another. What good parent would not lay down his or her life for a dying child? So if we, who are fallen creatures, are willing to sacrifice ourselves for the betterment of our children, even for the preservation of their lives, how much greater is the love of our God in heaven?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Note that God does not qualify His love. His love is not conditional. He unconditionally loved the entire world—all of fallen humanity—that He sent Jesus to save us from ourselves, for “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). And so we are given the freedom to practice our faith in Jesus Christ whom we claim to believe by doing the things, which He has said to do. Without the liberty to practice such discipleship, we could not make the necessary progress. Without the liberty to act freely, we could not be accountable for the choices that we did not have the freedom to make. “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

The United States Constitution was designed to prevent the captivity of a nation. Captivity and death always follow despots and dictators. Their sole desire is to obtain absolute control over everyone. Simply put, they want to be in charge and they don't care how they make it happen. They tend to offer power and wealth to their friends for their support, and thereafter they may offer the realms of safety and equality to the masses. They will divide the people by convincing them of how unsafe and unequal they have made each other. But rather than take responsibility for their human nature, correct themselves, and govern themselves, the people abdicate their individual sovereignty, and give the despots power and authority to make things right for them, thus surrendering their freedom.

And that is what the Constitution is all about—
providing freedom from abuse by those in authority.

Anyone who says the American Constitution is obsolete just because social and economic conditions have changed does not understand the real genius of the Constitution. It was designed to control something which has not changed and will not change—namely, human nature.³

But the Constitution, like any document, is only as good as the people who uphold it. If there is ever a failure in liberty or leadership, it is not because the document failed the people, but rather it is because the people failed the document. Or as Founding Father John Adams observed, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other” (From John Adams to Massachusetts Militia, 11 October 1798). James Madison wrote that our Constitution requires “sufficient virtue among men for self-government,” otherwise, “nothing less than the chains of despotism can restrain them from destroying and devouring one another” (James Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 55, p. 346).

Since the days of Adam and Eve, human nature has not changed. Satan's sole purpose in taking ownership of the Earth was to bring the posterity of Adam and Eve into captivity. The Earth already belonged, by God's decree, to Adam and Eve to use freely, even after they were driven out from Eden. The root of evil in men's hearts is avarice, the love of money. It is avarice, greed, etc, that motivated Cain to deprive Abel of his—Abel's—substance. Satan convinced Cain that such wealth would liberate him, so Cain assumed Abel's property by extortion, or in other words, the force of his death. Cain extorted from Abel his wealth by killing him. And when Cain acquired his ill-gotten gain, he supposed that he would never have to live the rest of the days of his life by the sweat of his brow.

And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him. And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands.⁴

One constant in the course of the history of the world's civilizations is human nature. Almost all men, even decent and moral men have no problem whatsoever being someone else's leader. Because of their nature, they find it easy to exercise authority over others. They find it reasonable to apply their morality and ideals, perpetuating traditions and policies in place of correct precepts and principles when exerting influence over others. This is folly. It is a fast, slippery slope towards evil, injustice, and also inequality in God's eyes. While Joseph Smith was unjustly imprisoned in Liberty, Missouri, having suffered exceedingly, and while praying, he received the following revelation from the Lord:

33 How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.

34 Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

35 Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

37 That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

38 Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God.

39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

40 Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

41 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile...⁵

But not everyone seeks power and authority. Some seek the honors of men. They desire fame and fortune, academic degrees and certifications, recognition, and acclaim. This creates competition and it's how people get ahead of others in life. Their hearts are set upon these worldly pursuits and they define themselves by their status and material wealth among their peers, perpetuating their idolatry. Avraham Gileadi wrote:

Isaiah satirically parodies the role of idols in Babylon's society. People attribute their success in

life to them rather than to God. After all, they provide a decent living for those who manufacture, promote, and sell them. In fact, the entire human establishment revolves around them. The very machinery of Bayblon thrives on the profuse production of idols, the fruits of man's resourcefulness and marvelous ingenuity...

Isaiah depicts this preoccupation with idols as false "worship," set in opposition to true worship. The Hebrew verb "worship" (*'abad*) also means "work" (*'abad*). Applying this dual meaning, whatever people work at, spend their energies and resources on, that is what they worship. Those who belong to Babylon, however, don't perceive it for what it is. They can't for a moment imagine that they are worshipping idols or that there is a problem with what they do. They carry their idols on their persons, they place them in their homes, they idolize and adore them, yet they don't discern that it is idolatry. Materialism, like any other culture, seeks to perpetuate itself and provides its own rationale.⁶

And while they don't necessarily seek power over the masses, they inevitably end up exalting themselves above their peers because of their wealth and their status, thus creating a gap in equality between themselves and their less fortunate fellow men. More often than not, man tends to justify himself in accumulating wealth, or in other words, "excess." If he is a hard-working individual, he deserves every penny he earned and it is his to do with as he pleases. But if his neighbor (see Luke 10:29-37) is not as clever in his occupation as he is, then he deserves to be poor and destitute. King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon had something to say about this:

16 And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish.

17 Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just—

18 But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God.

19 For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?

20 And behold, *even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins.* And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceedingly great was your joy.

21 And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another.

22 And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God, to whom also your life belongeth; and yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done.

23 I say unto you, wo be unto that man, for his substance shall perish with him; and now, I say these things unto those who are rich as pertaining to the things of this world.

24 And again, I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day; I mean all you who deny the beggar, because ye have not; I would that ye say in your hearts that: I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give.

25 And now, if ye say this in your hearts ye remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned; and your condemnation is just for ye covet that which ye have not received.

26 And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, *for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.*⁷

Here we read that if we want to retain a remission of our sins, or in other words, if we want God to continually forgive our sins, and remove our burdens of guilt, we should likewise continually remove the burdens of those less fortunate. If we in our power seek to elevate

the poor, God will likewise elevate us who are poor in spirit. He has freely given us the Earth and each other so that we might learn to get along with each other through our trials and errors, all our offenses and also all our forgivenesses, and to cooperate as well as to give freely to each other without thoughts of return.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask *them* not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.⁸

But giving good gifts is detrimental to economics. How can you get people to pay you for what others give away for free? This also applies to religion and it's one reason the Pharisees hated Jesus—He was bad for their business. Why pay ministers when the Son of God offers salvation for free? He gave the Earth to Adam and Eve to cultivate freely without price.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?⁹

But fallen man exacts a price and he over-exacts much. Modern economics deals with the production, consumption, and transfer of wealth, or in other words, money. You can buy anything in this world with money. But you must first get gain, or in other words, make a profit. This cannot happen except by extortion. Man robs God, takes ownership of the Earth, then with his ill-gotten gain, he does not transfer it unless he profits thereby. God has forbidden this or as we read in Matthew 6:24, you cannot serve God and Mammon. The Hebrew word *Mamonut* means finance, *Mamonai* means financier, and *Mamoni* means money. This is the way of the world, or in other words, Babylon. It is the continual exchange of substance for a price. But God has something else in mind:

18 Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart;
19 Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.
20 And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, *not to excess, neither by extortion.*¹⁰

It is by such extortion that makes thieves of beggars like Jean Valjean, and harlots like Fantine of *Les Miserables* who after selling her hair and her two front teeth to provide for her child, resorts in desperation to surrender her virtue by prostituting herself, so that she might support her daughter. Extortion is the practice of obtaining

something, especially money, through force or threats. Fantine's virtue was extorted by a man who otherwise could have provided for her through Godly means, or in other words, succor. Instead, he took from her a precious thing by the threat of ultimatum. He lorded over her his power to provide for her freely, but instead, he leveraged her virtue to satisfy his carnal desires. She chose to finance her bread with her virtue. Of course, this could also be viewed as a voluntary exchange. Nobody forced Fantine to submit to the man's terms. But this is how the economies of this fallen world have worked for a very long time. This is precisely how despots and dictators operate! But if God offers forgiveness and salvation freely, why do we not likewise offer freely to the downtrodden? There is only one justification according to scripture for obtaining wealth:

12 And now behold, my brethren, this is the word which I declare unto you, that many of you have begun to search for gold, and for silver, and for all manner of precious ores, in the which this land, which is a land of promise unto you and to your seed, doth abound most plentifully.

13 And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they.

14 And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you.

15 O that he would show you that he can pierce you,

and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust!

16 O that he would rid you from this iniquity and abomination. And, O that ye would listen unto the word of his commands, and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls!

17 Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.

18 But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

19 And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.¹¹

There have been few cases in recorded history where people have lived in perfect harmony and cooperation. We get a tiny glimpse of this in a small community of believers of Jesus Christ who had received the Holy Ghost:

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.¹²

Another recorded instance was among the people at Bountiful after Jesus Christ had resurrected and ministered to them:

1 And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth, and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about. And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and *they did also receive the Holy Ghost.*

2 And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.

3 And *they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.*¹³

It didn't matter whether they were Jews, Nephites, or Lamanites. Once they believed Jesus and were baptized, they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with the love of God. They became one people. With the love of God in their hearts, they had all things common among them. There is a distinction to be made between having

something or even all things *in* common with people and having all things common among people. Having “all things common” among people means they all freely share and share-alike. Enoch and his people likewise had all things common among them. As the world in his days became more corrupt, Enoch’s people gathered together like the aforementioned Jews in the New Testament, and the Nephites and Lamanites in the Book of Mormon.

16 And from that time forth there were wars and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness.

17 The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord, which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.

18 *And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.*

19 And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.¹⁴

Professor Hugh Nibley explained in one of his many profound lectures that in every dispensation, there has been a Zion on the Earth:

First of all in the time of Adam, when “the Holy One of Zion...established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman” (D&C 78:15). After Adam, Enoch had his Zion when ‘the Lord called his people ZION’ and Enoch “built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION” (Moses 7:18-19). But then “it

came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED” (Moses 7:69).

“Zion comes and goes. When the world cannot support Zion, Zion is not destroyed but taken back home. “And thou has taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations,” says Moses 7:31. And when the world is qualified to receive Zion, “there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made” (Moses 7:64). Accordingly, the ancient prophets of Israel yearned for the time when Zion would be restored again. Jeremiah and Isaiah hoped to see Zion restored in their time. They certainly knew it would come in a later day. Typical of their attitude is the prophecy of the Psalmist: “My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass. But thou, O Lord,...shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come...When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.” And then he adds, “This shall be written for the generation to come” (Psalm 102:11-18). After all the calamities, said Jeremiah, “there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God” (Jeremiah 31:6). And of course we all know the prophecy of Micah 4:1-2: “But in the last days...the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come....For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” This was the hope of the prophets. It

was also anticipated in the days of the ancient apostles that “ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,” as Paul describes the Church (Hebrews 12:22).

“But it’s in the last days that the fulfillment will really get underway with the restoration and the steps approaching the establishment of Zion.”¹⁵

NOTES

1. George Orwell, *1984* (A Signet Classic New American Library, 1983), pp. 305-306.
2. Gary Allen, *None Dare Call It A Conspiracy* (Concord Press, 1971), p. 21.
3. Cleon Skousen, *The 5000 Year Leap* (National Center for Constitutional Studies, 2006), p. 166.
4. *Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 5:32-33.
5. *The Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 121.
6. Avraham Gileadi, *Isaiah Decoded* (Hebraeus Press, 20013), pp. 91-92.
7. *The Book of Mormon*, Mosiah 4, emphasis added.
8. *The Holy Bible*, Luke 6.
9. *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 6.
10. *The Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 59, emphasis added.
11. *The Book of Mormon*, Jacob 2, emphasis added.
12. *The Holy Bible*, Acts 4, emphasis added.
13. *The Book of Mormon*, 4 Nephi 1.
14. *The Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 7, emphasis added.
15. Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, ch. 1: Our Glory or Our Condemnation (Deseret Book Company, 1989), pp. 4-6.

CHAPTER 9

WHY ZION?

First, we must ask what is Zion? Zion is the antithesis—the direct opposite—of Babylon, which is this fallen world that we all currently occupy, ruled by Satan and all who love the material and vain things of this world, and also who seek to rule and control others and to be ruled and controlled by others. It's more than any fictional Utopian society. It is where people live in perfect harmony with one another and who have the love of God within them and His law written in their hearts. Where Babylon is darkness, Zion is light. But most importantly, Zion is where all people know the Lord intimately and walk with Him as Enoch and his people walked with Him (Genesis 5:22-24). They are called Zion because they possess three characteristics or qualities devoid of those people who love Babylon and serve Mammon. As mentioned in the previous chapter, those three qualities are:

1. They are of one heart and one mind.
2. They dwell in righteousness (they deal justly with one another).
3. There are *no poor* among them.

What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and *the poor* of his people shall trust in it.¹

Zion is also mentioned throughout the Bible by many prophets as a haven. The Hebrew word, *tsiyon* or *tsion*, means the highest point, the holy place. It is a heavenly city. Zion, which many people today anticipate with the second coming of Jesus Christ, will also be a place of refuge for those who seek shelter from an increasingly wicked world, and from those corrupt despots and dictators who seek absolute control of it. So Zion is both a place and a people.

Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? *Or* shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.²

Isaiah compared Zion to a virtuous woman. She is Israel who becomes the redeemed bride when the veil is lifted, and she is revealed to Jesus Christ the Bridegroom at His second coming to celebrate their great wedding feast. Anciently, her children were the unfaithful covenant people.

Thus saith the LORD, Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.³

From the beginning of the Old Testament, Israel was covetous, whoring after idols, and prostituting herself for riches (Exodus 34:15-16, Ezekiel 6:9, Hosea 9:1, etc.). Despite her infidelity through the ages, God has loved Her dearly and will return to comfort her.

For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.⁴

Although she has always been unfaithful to Him, the Lord has always been faithful to her, and it will be He who comforts Her. It is He who took upon Himself flesh to rescue and to redeem Her.

Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker *is* thine husband; the LORD of hosts *is* his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.⁵

She became a widow when the Redeemer and the Holy One of Israel was made flesh and was crucified. But though He was resurrected and returned to heaven, in glory He will return and with glory, He will clothe Her. And the children of Zion will rejoice for a thousand years as the Apostle John wrote in Revelation chapter 20 and as Isaiah also described in his book:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child

shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.⁶

But when will these things be? In the early 1830s, the first Latter-day Saints attempted to lay the foundation of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, as commanded by the Lord but were unable to do so because of persecutions heaped upon them. But they were also very unprepared, not having one heart and one mind. On December 10, 1833, Joseph Smith wrote:

I cannot learn from any communication by the Spirit to me, that Zion has forfeited her claim to a celestial crown, notwithstanding the Lord has caused her to be thus afflicted, except it may be some individuals, who have walked in disobedience, and forsaken the new covenant; all such will be made manifest by their works in due time. I have always expected that Zion would suffer some affliction, from what I could learn from the commandments which have been given. But I would remind you of a certain clause in one which says, that after much tribulation cometh the blessing [see D&C 58:4]. By this, and also others, and also one received of late, I know that Zion, in the due time of the Lord, will be redeemed; but how many will be the days of her purification, tribulation, and affliction, the Lord has kept hid from my eyes; and when I inquire concerning this subject, the voice of the Lord is: Be still, and know that I am God! All those who suffer for my name shall reign with me, and he that layeth down his life for my sake shall find it again.⁷

One week later, the Lord revealed to Joseph who was then in Kirtland, Ohio concerning the condition of the fledgling Latter-day Saint church. He said:

1 Verily I say unto you, concerning your brethren who have been afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out from the land of their inheritance—

2 I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions;

3 Yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels.

4 Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son.

5 For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified.

6 Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances.

7 They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble.

8 In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me.⁸

Meanwhile, the Saints had procrastinated the construction of the temple in Kirtland. The Lord revealed a parable to Joseph Smith, portending their failure to perform the work necessary for the redemption of Zion:

43 And now, I will show unto you a parable, that you may know my will concerning the redemption of Zion.

44 A certain nobleman had a spot of land, very choice; and he said unto his servants: Go ye unto my vineyard, even upon this very choice piece of land, and plant twelve olive trees;

45 And set watchmen round about them, and build a tower, that one may overlook the land round about, to be a watchman upon the tower, that mine olive trees may not be broken down when the enemy shall come to spoil and take upon themselves the fruit of my vineyard.

46 Now, the servants of the nobleman went and did as their lord commanded them, and planted the olive trees, and built a hedge round about, and set watchmen, and began to build a tower.

47 And while they were yet laying the foundation thereof, they began to say among themselves: And what need hath my lord of this tower?

48 And consulted for a long time, saying among themselves: What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace?

49 Might not this money be given to the exchangers? For there is no need of these things.

50 And while they were at variance one with another they became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord.

51 And the enemy came by night, and broke down the hedge; and the servants of the nobleman arose and were affrighted, and fled; and the enemy destroyed their works, and broke down the olive trees.

52 Now, behold, the nobleman, the lord of the vineyard, called upon his servants, and said unto them, Why! what is the cause of this great evil?

53 Ought ye not to have done even as I commanded you, and—after ye had planted the vineyard, and built the hedge round about, and set watchmen upon the walls thereof—built the tower also, and set a watchman upon the tower, and watched for my vineyard, and not have fallen asleep, lest the enemy should come upon you?

54 And behold, the watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off; and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof, and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer.

55 And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry;

56 And go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine; I have bought it with money.

57 Therefore, get ye straightway unto my land; break down the walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen.

58 And inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies, that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land.

59 And the servant said unto his lord: When shall these things be?

60 And he said unto his servant: When I will; go ye straightway, and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you;

61 And this shall be my seal and blessing upon you—a faithful and wise steward in the midst of mine house, a ruler in my kingdom.

62 And his servant went straightway, and did all things whatsoever his lord commanded him; and after many days all things were fulfilled.⁹

The church has always extolled the Saints because of their trials and their persecutions. But little is ever mentioned regarding their slothfulness in their duties.

Beyond laying out stones and logs to mark the foundation site, however, the Saints in Zion made no effort to build the temple that would have protected them in times of trial. Instead, they attempted to establish Zion without building a temple, and they put their resources into other enterprises instead. This led first to arguing, then to laziness, and then to breaking the commandments (see v. 50). At that point, the Lord allowed the mobs to descend upon them, first in July and then again in November 1833, and the Missouri Saints, whose watchmen were seemingly asleep on duty (see v. 53), found themselves defenseless and unprepared.¹⁰

In 1834, under Joseph's leadership, the Saints from Ohio and other areas marched to Missouri in an expedition later known as Zion's Camp. It was their purpose to escort the exiled Missouri Saints back to reclaim their lands in Jackson County, reestablish the church at Independence, and attempt to build a temple in Zion as commanded by the Lord. The Missourians who had previously

persecuted them feared retaliation from Zion's Camp, and preemptively attacked some Saints who lived in Clay County, Missouri. After the governor of Missouri withdrew his promise to support the Saints, Joseph Smith received the following revelation:

1 Verily I say unto you who have assembled yourselves together that you may learn my will concerning the redemption of mine afflicted people—

2 Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now.

3 But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

4 And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;

5 And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.

6 And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer.

7 I speak not concerning those who are appointed to lead my people, who are the first elders of my church, for they are not all under this condemnation;

8 But I speak concerning my churches abroad—there are many who will say: Where is their God? Behold, he will deliver them in time of trouble, otherwise we will not go up unto Zion, and will keep our moneys.

9 Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders

should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion—

10 That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands.¹¹

By 1838, although they had built a temple and had received great blessings, the Saints had been expelled from Kirtland, Ohio, and had fled to Missouri to establish the city of Far West as a temporary place of refuge. Joseph and his family had arrived there in March and one month later, he received a revelation from the Lord commanding the Saints to build a temple there. They were explicitly told to begin work on the fourth of July and to labor diligently to finish it (D&C 115:7-16). It had become necessary for Joseph to address the Saints for their neglect in doing their duties. In a speech to the Saints there in Far West, he declared:

Brethren, we are gathering to this beautiful land to build up Zion...But since I have been here I perceive the spirit of selfishness, covetousness exists in the hearts of the saints...Here are those who begin to spread out, buying up all the land they are able to do...thinking to lay foundations for themselves only, looking to their own individual families...Now I want to tell you that Zion cannot be built up in any such way...I see signs put out, beer signs, speculative schemes are being introduced. This is the ways of the world—Babylon indeed, and I tell you in the name of the God of Israel, if there is not repentance...you will be broken up and scattered from this choice land.¹²

On October of 1838, Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs issued an extermination order allowing residents to push out the Latter-day Saints under threat of death. Mobs massacred residents at Haun's Mill, killing seventeen Saints, including seven-year-old Alma Smith and nine-year-old Charles Merrick. A man named William Reynolds justified killing a ten-year-old boy saying, "Nits will make lice, and if he had lived he would have become a Mormon." Two months later, Joseph was taken into custody and unjustly imprisoned at Liberty Jail where he endured many months of harsh winter. Thereafter, he moved to Nauvoo, Illinois, where the Saints had relocated. There, the Saints experienced a period of peace sufficient to enable them to build beautiful homes for themselves. Although construction of a temple had begun in 1841, the focus seemed instead to be upon their city.

There were seven brickyards, five on the bluff and two on the flats. The brickyards could produce seven million bricks in a single season. Heber C. Kimball had built two log homes for his family before moving into a two-story brick home that he had constructed complete with a parlor, a study, a music room, a dining room, a master bedroom, a nursery, two children's bedrooms, and many fireplaces throughout. Wilford Woodruff put a fireplace in every bedroom, eight in all, of his two-story red brick home. He had personally made the bricks used in his home construction. In his journal, he wrote, "I went to a brick kiln, and flung out 7,000 bricks, nearly melting myself." John Taylor and Brigham Young each had also built beautiful two-story red brick homes for their families. The city also included a blacksmith shop, a boot shop, a cultural hall, a printing office, a tin shop, a bakery, a drug and variety store, a post office and mercantile, and more.

The city boasted many brick homes and brick buildings before persecutions finally drove them from the state after the murder of Joseph Smith. The temple had not yet at that point been half

completed. The Saints then made a hasty series of efforts to complete the Nauvoo temple but were met with setback after setback, completing the temple one section at a time before abandoning it and their stately homes and beautiful city. But as Moses was taken from the Israelites, so too was Joseph taken from the Latter-day Saints, and with him the opportunity to perform the work necessary for the redemption of Zion. Mobs had overrun Nauvoo, and the temple suffered fire after fire, disaster after disaster until finally, May 27, 1850, A tornado struck, and debris fell around workers who were repairing the walls of the temple. The St. Louis based *Daily Missouri Republican* recorded:

This frightful hurricane, the most terrible experienced in the country in many years, burst suddenly on the hill of Nauvoo, where lightnings, thunder, wind, hail and rain, seemed united to assail the building.¹³

By that time, many Saints had already trekked west through the wilderness like the ancient Israelites who had wandered in the desert until they arrived in the promised land. Two years before the temple was struck by a tornado, the first pioneer settlers in the Salt Lake Valley had already contended with a plague of crickets that had devastated their crops before flocks of seagulls had helped save them from destruction as the countless birds consumed the swarming insects. The servants and the watchmen of the vineyard had been driven from the Nobleman's choice piece of land. They had exalted themselves in their fine brick homes, shops, and halls, but the Lord had abased them and driven them into the wilderness while Zion yet remained unredeemed.

The Saints learned obedience the hard way by the afflictions they suffered in the wilderness, having been cast out of their homes and forced to depart into the wilderness in the brutal Winter. Cyrus H.

Wheelock wrote a hymn commemorating their departure in which the chorus is sung with fervor even today, “O Babylon, O Babylon, we bid thee farewell; We’re going to the mountains of Ephraim to dwell” (*LDS Hymns*, Ye Elders of Israel, p. 319).

But they brought Babylon with them to the mountainous desert of Utah. Brigham Young said of the fledgling new community:

Have we separated ourselves from the nations? Yes. And what else have we done?... Have we not brought Babylon with us? Are we not promoting Babylon here in our midst? Are we not fostering the spirit of Babylon that is now abroad on the face of the whole earth?... Yes, yes, to some extent, and there is not a Latter-day Saint but what feels that we have too much of Babylon in our midst.¹⁴

Brigham lamented on many occasions the greed and idolatry of the Latter-day Saints in their new desert home. On one such occasion, he exclaimed:

I am more afraid of covetousness in our elders than I am of the hordes of hell. Have we men out now of that class? I believe so. I am afraid of such spirits; for they are more powerful and injurious to this people than all hell outside our borders. All of her enemies in the United States or in the world and all hell with them marshaled against us to not do us the injury that covetousness in the hearts of this people to do us; For it is idolatry.¹⁵

It is imperative that all believers in Jesus Christ, whatever religion we profess, learn to gather and purify ourselves of all ungodliness

and to forsake all worldliness, covetousness, and to abandon all our lusts for material wealth. We must learn to seek to elevate the poor and make ourselves all equal in earthly things that there might be no more poor among us so that the Lord might make us all equal in heavenly things (D&C 78:3-7) if we are of but one heart and one mind, dealing justly with one another. Joseph Smith declared:

Let every one labor to prepare himself for the vineyard, sparing a little time to comfort the mourners; to bind up the broken-hearted; to reclaim the backslider; to bring back the wanderer; to reinvite into the kingdom such as have been cut off, by encouraging them to lay to while the day lasts, and work righteousness, and, with one heart and one mind, prepare to help redeem Zion, that goodly land of promise, where the willing and the obedient shall be blessed. Souls are as precious in the sight of God as they ever were; and the Elders were never called to drive any down to hell, but to persuade and invite all men everywhere to repent, that they may become the heirs of salvation.¹⁶

To all Elders of Israel: we must stop our vain and worldly pursuits and stop procrastinating the day of our repentance, and arise now to save the Constitution of the United States and preserve our liberty. We must heed God's admonitions and warnings, educate ourselves, and teach one another that we might all be edified, and in the Lord's strength, prepare for the work necessary to redeem Zion, and to welcome the Great and Dreadful Day of His Second Coming.

For the Lord will have a place whence His word will go forth, in these last days, in purity; for if Zion will not purify herself, so as to be approved of in all things, in His sight, ***He will seek another people***; for

His work will go on until Israel is gathered, and they who will not hear His voice, must expect to feel His wrath. Let me say unto you, seek to purify yourselves, and also all the inhabitants of Zion, lest the Lord's anger be kindled to fierceness. Repent, repent, is the voice of God to Zion; and strange as it may appear, yet it is true, mankind will persist in self-justification until all their iniquity is exposed, and their character past being redeemed, and that which is treasured up in their hearts be exposed to the gaze of mankind, I say to you (and what I say to you I say to all), hear the warning voice of God lest Zion fall, and the Lord swear in His wrath the inhabitants of Zion shall not enter into His rest.¹⁷

Or as the final prophet and record keeper of the Book of Mormon wrote:

35 Wherefore, I know by this thing which thou hast said, that if the Gentiles have not charity, because of our weakness, that thou wilt prove them, and take away their talent, yea, even that which they have received, and give unto them who shall have more abundantly.

36 And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity.

37 And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.

38 And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood.¹⁸

God has always intended for His faithful people to be free. Indeed, as Isaiah prophesied, when He returns to rule and to reign in glory, the government, or in other words, His people—His family—shall be upon His shoulders. And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government, there shall be no end (Isaiah 9:6-7). And as the prophet Zephaniah wrote concerning Zion in the last days, and the triumph of His faithful and diligent people when Jesus Christ comes to reign in their midst:

14 Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

15 The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, *even* the LORD, *is* in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.

16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: *and to Zion*, Let not thine hands be slack.

17 The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

18 I will gather *them that are* sorrowful for the solemn assembly, *who* are of thee, *to whom* the reproach of it *was* a burden.

19 Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that

was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

20 At that time will I bring you *again*, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.¹⁹

NOTES

1. *The Holy Bible*, Isaiah 14:32, emphasis added.
2. *The Holy Bible*, Isaiah 66:8.
3. *The Holy Bible*, Isaiah 50:1.
4. *The Holy Bible*, Isaiah 51:3.
5. *The Holy Bible*, Isaiah 54:4-5.
6. *The Holy Bible*, Isaiah 11:6-9.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, Establishing the Cause of Zion, p. 185-186; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 34.
8. *The Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 101.
9. *The Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 101.
10. Stephen E. Robinson, H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants* (Deseret Book Company, 2012), 3:277.
11. *The Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 105.
12. Edward Stevenson, *Life and History of Elder Edward Stevenson*, p. 40-41.
13. 27 May 1850, quoted in Don F. Colvin, *The Nauvoo Temple: A Story of Faith* (Covenant Communications, Inc., 2002), p.270.
14. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 17, p. 38.
15. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 12, p. 269.
16. Joseph Smith, *Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1, No. 8, pp. 137-8.
17. B. H. Roberts, *History of the Church*, vol. 1 (Deseret Book Company, 1978), p. 316, emphasis added.
18. *The Book of Mormon*, Ether 12.
19. *The Holy Bible*, Zephaniah 3.

CHAPTER 10

SACRIFICE

Concerning Zion, a controversial subject, which I have observed is seldom discussed, particularly among my fellow Latter-day Saints, is the voluntary sacrifice required to obtain the blessings associated with Zion as outlined in *The Lectures On Faith*, and more specifically, the sixth lecture. We Latter-day Saints, and truly most, if not all Christians, tend to be slothful in our duties. The Lord declared that those who must be commanded in all things or are compelled in all things, are slothful and unwise servants who will receive no reward (D&C 58:26). The Lord desires that we anxiously engage continually in a good cause, and do many things of our own free will, to bring to pass righteousness (D&C 58:27). An acquaintance of mine once wrote that he observed others use the principles of sacrifice found in these particular lectures as a “pretext and justification for their spiritually fanatical sacrifices,” and considers lectures six and seven to be “pure spiritual extremism.”

Who can blame people for thinking this? After all, who would sacrifice their son on an altar as Abraham did with Isaac? What kind of rational being would submit to such a thing? Does that make God

irrational for likewise offering up Jesus Christ to be brutally slaughtered by Romans? Furthermore, Jesus Christ, a radical among a people of tradition, expected those people to drop what they were doing to follow Him. He frowned upon one who desired first to bury his father. He considered another unworthy who wanted first to say good-bye to those back home. To yet another, Jesus required that he sell all his possessions and donate all the proceeds to the poor. To a multitude that followed Him, He required first that each of them hate their mother, father, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even themselves or they could not be His disciples. Such spiritual extremism demands that you believe or be damned. To quote *The Lectures On Faith*:

For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also, counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, requires more than mere belief, or supposition that he is doing the will of God, but actual knowledge: realizing, that when these sufferings are ended he will enter into eternal rest; and be a partaker of the glory of God.¹

Man was given dominion over the earth to help him in his journey to know good from evil, joy from sorrow, and to gain experience that he might obtain a fullness of joy with God as a redeemed soul. Instead, man takes of the Earth to enrich himself and to exalt himself, exacting a price from his neighbor, forgetting that all things were given to him to be used, not by extortion or excess (D&C 59:15-21). And so he creates inequality and poverty on the Earth and persecutes the poor for their poverty.

35 And all they who suffer persecution for my name, and endure in faith, though they are called to lay down their lives for my sake yet shall they partake of all this glory.

36 Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full.

37 Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul.

38 And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life.²

Such sacrifices enable the kind of equality that the Lord desires of us. This is how Zion becomes redeemed. When the Saints make themselves equal in earthly things, then will the Lord make them equal in heavenly things (D&C 78:5-6). This must happen from the least to the greatest until there is not one least or one greatest. Until the Saints understand and do this, from the least to the greatest, they will remain unredeemed. But like the old tree in the allegory found in Jacob chapter five of the Book of Mormon, the branches remain lofty and barren, taking the strength of the roots unto themselves, being good for nothing but to be burned because they did nothing more than cumber the vineyard. The Lord desires fruit, but He desires good fruit. So He labors tirelessly so that the tree might yield much good fruit.

72 And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their mights; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them; and they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things.

73 And there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard; and the natural branches began to grow and

thrive exceedingly; and the wild branches began to be plucked off and to be cast away; and they did keep the root and the top thereof *equal*, according to the strength thereof.

74 And thus they labored, with all diligence, according to the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard, even until the bad had been cast away out of the vineyard, and the Lord had preserved unto himself that the trees had become again the natural fruit; and they became like unto *one body*; and the *fruits were equal*; and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit, which was most precious unto him from the beginning.

75 And it came to pass that when the Lord of the vineyard saw that his *fruit was good*, and that his vineyard was *no more corrupt*, he called up his servants, and said unto them: Behold, for this last time have we nourished my vineyard; and thou beholdest that I have done according to my will; and I have preserved the natural fruit, that it is *good*, even like as it was in the beginning. And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, that my vineyard is *no more corrupted*, and the bad is cast away, behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard.³

There were no more lofty, barren branches. The fruits were good because they were equal. And because they were equal, they were not corrupt anymore. But the Lord did not compel or force the fruit to be good and to be equal. He labored throughout the timeline of allegory to allow the branches the opportunity to become equal and fruitful and did not joy in them when they had exalted themselves.

60 And because that I have preserved the natural branches and the roots thereof, and that I have grafted in the natural branches again into their mother tree, and have preserved the roots of their mother tree, that, *perhaps*, the trees of my vineyard may bring forth again good fruit; and that I may have joy again in the fruit of my vineyard, and, perhaps, that I may rejoice exceedingly that I have preserved the roots and the branches of the first fruit...⁴

Throughout the allegory, the Lord uses the word “perhaps.”

“...that, *perhaps*, the trees of my vineyard may bring forth again good fruit; and that I may have joy again in the fruit of my vineyard, and, perhaps, that I may rejoice exceedingly...”

“...that, *perhaps*, I may preserve unto myself the roots thereof for mine own purpose...”

“...that, *perhaps*, the roots thereof may take strength because of their goodness...”

“...I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it, that *perhaps* it may shoot forth young and tender branches, and it perish not...”

“...that *perhaps* it may bring forth good fruit...”

“...It grieveth me that I should lose this tree; wherefore, that *perhaps* I might preserve the roots thereof that they perish not...”

“...that when they shall be sufficiently strong *perhaps* they may bring forth good fruit unto me, and I may yet have glory in the fruit of my vineyard...”⁵

God does not force us to love Him or obey His commandments. But He continually labors to nourish us and to strengthen us—to persuade us to love one another enough to make ourselves equal in His eyes. As we read the allegory to the conclusion, eventually some branches begin to produce fruit equally. They are those who make the necessary sacrifices, who rather than taking strength unto themselves and exalting themselves, they give freely to the poor until there are no more poor and all have made themselves equal in earthly things. It is then that the Lord of the vineyard rejoices and makes them equal in heavenly things. The rest are cast away into the fire, being barren, lofty, and unprofitable to Him, though they may have been profitable to themselves. From *The Lectures on Faith*, we read:

Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things: it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things, that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has, for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice, because he seeks to do his will, he does know most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and

offering, and that he has not nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.⁶

Perhaps such are spiritual fanatics indeed. Professor Emeritus Truman G. Madsen once spoke the following words at a devotional:

Said the Prophet Joseph Smith after one of the most revelatory meetings in his life, “There was nothing made known to these men [the Twelve] but what will be made known to all the Saints of the last days, so soon as they are prepared to receive” (TPJS, p. 237). This is the religion of every man. Not “Take my word for my experience,” but “Duplicate it in your own life.” How far do I go with this? All the way.

Let me then come to a close. I have hiked, with my wife and at night, all the way from the base of what is known as Mt. Sinai to the top. (Incidentally, with a very sore toe. Climbing hurts, and the more you climb, sometimes the more it hurts.) We went up to where the air is thinner and the veil thinner. There isn’t time to describe the feeling, but we were able to recollect that Moses, there, had face-to-face communion with God. He came back down and said to the children of Israel, in the name of the God whose name he knew, “Now, you are invited to go back up with me.”

And they said, “Thank you. No. That’s for prophets. That’s for people who are a bit fanatical. We will stay here and you go up, Moses.”

In his absence they built an idol. The power of religious impulses goes in many directions. They built an idol—a thing—and were denied the privileges of Moses (D&C 84:23–25). That is what our generation is now doing again. We are staying down below and then claiming superiority for our judgment in doing so.⁷

Furthermore, in *The Lectures on Faith* we read:

It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him.⁸

The lofty, barren branches were removed and taken away and cast into the fire. The Lord remembers them no more. Unlike the rich man in one of Jesus Christ's parables, it was the beggar who was acknowledged by name. It was Lazarus who was comforted and taken to Abraham's bosom (also translated as Abraham's side or arms). The nameless rich man, instead, was cast into the fire, not having learned to be kind, charitable, and Godly, but having taken strength unto himself, and exalting himself among his neighbors.

The Lectures on Faith summarize the overarching message of the Book of Mormon as declared by the mouth of the Lord and recorded by the prophet Moroni in the book of Ether, which chronicles the brother of Jared's spiritual extremism and fanatical sacrifices:

13 Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of *unbelief*.

14 Come unto me, O ye house of Israel, and it shall be made manifest unto you how great things the Father hath laid up for you, from the foundation of the world; and it hath not come unto you, because of *unbelief*.

15 Behold, *when ye shall rend that veil of unbelief* which doth cause you to remain in your awful state of wickedness, and hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, then shall the great and marvelous things which have been hid up from the foundation of the world from you—yea, when ye shall call upon the Father in my name, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then shall ye know that the Father hath remembered the covenant which he made unto your fathers, O house of Israel.⁹

The Lord addresses everyone. By addressing the Gentiles and also the House of Israel, He exempts nobody. Until one parts the veil as Enoch, Moses, the brother of Jared, and others, one is kept from “remembering” or “knowing” the covenant because of unbelief. This is precisely what *The Lectures On Faith* address in defining faith as the “moving cause of all action.” But as we read in verse fifteen above, it is this unbelief, which renders a person:

1. In an awful state of wickedness.
2. A hardness of heart.
3. A blindness of mind.

But how can anyone who believes the Book of Mormon not believe what it says to do? It was, after all, written by spiritual extremists. Or in other words, as we read again in *The Lectures On Faith*:

Let us here observe, that after any portion of the human family are made acquainted with the important fact that there is a God who has created and does uphold all things, the extent of their knowledge, respecting his character and glory, will depend upon their diligence and faithfulness in seeking after him, until like Enoch the brother of Jared, and Moses, they shall obtain faith in God, and power with him to behold him face to face.¹⁰

And its accompanying question in the same lecture:

Question 146: How do men obtain a knowledge of the glory of God, his perfections and attributes?

Answer: By devoting themselves to his service, through prayer and supplication incessantly, strengthening their faith in him, until like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, they obtain a manifestation of God to themselves.¹¹

Devoting ourselves to the Lord's service through prayer and supplication incessantly sounds like spiritual extremism. The brother of Jared did precisely this and was exceedingly blessed:

43 And there will I bless thee and thy seed, and raise up unto me of thy seed, and of the seed of thy brother, and they who shall go with thee, a great nation. And there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed, upon all the face of the earth. And thus I will do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me.¹²

And:

9 And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?

10 And he answered: Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me.

11 And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak?

12 And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie.

13 And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.

14 Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters...

18 And he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might know that he was God, because of the many great works which the Lord had showed unto him.

19 And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he

fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting.¹³

The Lectures On Faith conclude with the following promise:

For when faith comes, it brings its train of attendants with it—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, gifts, wisdom, knowledge, miracles, healings, tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc. All these appear when faith appears on the earth, and disappear when it disappears from the earth. For these are the effects of faith and always have, and always will attend it. For where faith is, there will the knowledge of God be also, with all things which pertain thereto—revelations, visions, and dreams, as well as every other necessary thing in order that the possessors of faith may be perfected and obtain salvation; for God must change, otherwise faith will prevail with him. And he who possesses it will, through it, obtain all necessary knowledge and wisdom until he shall know God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he has sent: whom to know is eternal life: Amen.¹⁴

God's promises are also a train of attendants to those who are faithful to Him. Among those not mentioned above is peace, but not as the world gives. It is *His* peace that He gives to us. He imparts this comfort so that our hearts do not become troubled or afraid (John 14:27). I love what my friend wrote concerning peace in this scripture in the book of John. It resonates deeply with me. I hope it also resonates with you:

What is it? It is having total peace in total chaos because you trust God. Normal reactions are to lose your mind when a piece of your order is revealed to be wrong, because it brings the whole into question.

God's love does not hide us from reality. It exposes us to reality.

The truth is progressive. The more you know of it, the more you will see the things inside of you that are not ideal. If you embrace the opportunity to part with what doesn't work, you will find more and better. Everything that is replaced brings you closer to your ideal self: more secure in God; in possession of greater peace; more resilient to the unavoidable difficulties of reality.

When you are consumed by love, you stand in the fire in peace. You can sleep on a boat in the midst of a terrible storm, as Jesus did. You can feel consummate joy while being stoned to death, as Stephen did. You can preach the gospel while being burned to death, as Abinadi did.

Embrace truth. Run towards it. Get excited about it. A warrior runs toward the sound of battle, because he knows that is where he is meant to be. Why are you running away from the battle? The battle is why you were born. It is why you are here. The battle calls you. Run to the sound of it.

Don't try to escape from reality. Like the pressures of deep water to the pearl diver, it is a sign you are in the right place, doing what you are meant to do.

Don't try to avoid pain. If you are reconciled to God, pain is the revelation of what you lack.

Everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die. Everyone wants to be a beast until it's time to do what beasts do. Embrace the vision of who you really are when it matters the most, when you are neck-deep in pressure and the only way out is through. True happiness is found only in facing and embracing all the undesirable things in this world! You do not receive happiness in the world to come in the same way people try to find it here. It isn't that the undesirable things are taken away, it is that you have transcended them.¹⁵

Sacrifices were required of brave men and women who ran to the sound of battle to found a nation, which became the cradle of liberty to a people with the opportunity and the solemn duty to “lift up an ensign to the nations,” (Isaiah 5:26) and to form a peculiar people—a light unto the world, even Zion. It will yet require the sacrifices of brave men and women who run to the sound of battle that is subtly being waged on the world stage by that great whore Babylon. Zion as yet remains unredeemed and the Constitution hangs by a thread. Are you embracing the vision of who you really are? Now is when it matters most. It's time to take a stand, choose a side, and make your voice heard because the only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.

NOTES

1. *The Lectures On Faith* 6:5.
2. *The Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 101.
3. *The Book of Mormon*, Jacob 5, emphasis added.
4. *The Book of Mormon*, Jacob 5, emphasis added.
5. *The Book of Mormon*, Jacob 5, emphasis added.
6. *The Lectures On Faith* 6:7.
7. Truman G. Madsen, *On How We Know*, BYU Devotional Address, Sept. 20, 1994.
8. *The Lectures On Faith* 6:8.
9. *The Book of Mormon*, Ether 4, emphasis added.
10. *The Lectures On Faith* 2:55.
11. *The Lectures On Faith* 2:Q&A.
12. *The Book of Mormon*, Ether 1:43.
13. *The Book of Mormon*, Ether 3.
14. *The Lectures On Faith* 7:20.
15. Robert Smith, *The Glory of God is Intelligence*, p. 281.

RECOMMENDED READING

“And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). Some of the best books in my library have been well worn from continuous reading, studying, underlining passages, folding down page corners, and applying sticky notes onto pages for quick references. Although some people balk at such treatment of books, I don’t. Including the scriptures, I consider the following books to be worthy of your time, and in the context of *By A Thread*, I highly recommend them for studying and inclusion in your library:

1. *1984*, George Orwell (A Signet Classic New American Library, 1983).
2. *An Enemy Hath Done This*, Ezra Taft Benson (Parliament Publishers, 1969).
3. *Approaching Zion*, Hugh Nibley (Deseret Book Company, 1989).
4. *Fourteen Months In American Bastiles*, Francis Key Howard (Kelly, Hedian, & Piet, 1863).
5. *History of the Church*, volumes 1-7, B.H. Roberts (Deseret Book Company, 1978).
6. *Isaiah Decoded*, Avraham Gileadi (Hebraeus Press, 20013).
7. *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, Richard Lyman Bushman (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).
8. *None Dare Call It A Conspiracy*, Gary Allen (Concord Press, 1971).
9. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Joseph Fielding Smith (Deseret Book Company, 1976).
10. *The 5000 Year Leap*, W. Cleon Skousen (National Center for Constitutional Studies, 2006).

11. *The Federalist Papers*, Hamilton, Madison, Jay (New American Library, 1961).
12. *The Glory Of God Is Intelligence*, Robert Smith (Robert Smith, 2019).
13. *The Lectures on Faith**, Joseph Smith (Public Domain, 1835).
14. *The Real Lincoln*, Thomas J. DiLorenzo (Three Rivers Press, 2003).
15. *The Words of Joseph Smith*, Andrew F. Ehat & Lyndon W. Cook (Grandin Book Company, 1991).

* “The idea has been expressed that Sidney Rigdon wrote these lectures, but they were compiled by a number of the brethren and the Prophet himself had the final revision of them” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History And Modern Revelation*, [2nd Year Manual of Four, “Being a Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums For the Year 1948,”] Lesson 69, 1948, p. 137).