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The Lord's Base of Operations

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Abstract: The Book of Mormon testifies of the great mission of America. America is a beacon of liberty to all the world. It is the Lord's base of operations. Church members must protect it from its greatest threat—moral decay from within—and we “must return to a love and respect for the basic spiritual concepts upon which this nation has been established.”

THIS WE BELIEVE . . .

Richard L. Evans

of the Council of the Twelve

There is a salutation customary among us which includes all within sight and sound—"My brethren and sisters"—and I see no reason to modify it. I am grateful for the relation that all of us bear to all of us in the Fatherhood of God and the relationship we have to him.

Because of an unusual series of assignments, we have circled the world twice this past year—once flying east, and once moving westward. We have been in many countries, among many peoples, in many places. We have encompassed areas where hundreds of different dialects and languages were spoken. We have been in the midst of a diversity of men, and in the midst of many differing religions and philosophies of life.

We count among our friends, men of many races, many faiths, many backgrounds, and beliefs, and these are not superficial friendships. They are part of our lives. We respect them and what they are and have an affection for them. We respect them and their beliefs, and we believe they respect us and ours.

As a consequence of this long journeying and these many friendships, we have been earnestly reading and seeking to understand the basic beliefs, the many philosophies of India and of Asia, and in doing so have consulted as closely as possible the people themselves and their authentic sources; and this we would ask our friends to do for us, as we would do it unto them also. When they want to know what we believe, we ask them to ask us, or consult our authentic sources instead of sources of intentional or unintentional distortion. No matter how many times an error is repeated, it is still an error. We believe that we ourselves are the best source of what we believe, as are other men of what they believe, and to those interested we should like to give the simple facts.

We have discovered, we think also, that mankind generally is sincerely searching, searching for the reasons, for the purpose of being, searching for the ultimate answers. "Man's success or failure, happiness or misery," President McKay has said, "depend upon what he seeks and chooses." What people believe is exceedingly important because what they believe will determine how they live. A person prepares differently for a short journey than he does for a long one, and a person who believes that life here is the end of all would prepare much differently and live much differently from him who believes that life is everlasting.

Thomas á Kempis said, "Where my thoughts are, there am I," and might have added, Where my beliefs are, where my convictions are, there am I—or at least in that direction I am headed.

For these reasons and because we love our friends, and because many of them have asked us, and because even if they hadn't we would want to do it anyway, we would like to say some few things today basic to our beliefs:

First of all, in common with many millions of men, we are devoutly Christian. This is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Jesus the Christ, with the doctrines, the commandments, the revelation, the inspiration, the authority that come of him and through him, is the foundation of this Church. He is the chief cornerstone, and not any man.

We believe what Jesus taught, and in this we rely on scripture, including the Bible, which we believe as it came from the mouths of the prophets. We believe also other works, given to other peoples anciently and modernly, in addition to that word given to ancient Israel—works which are consistent with and complementary to the Bible. In addition, we believe in the words of the

living prophets. We believe in continuous revelation, for we feel that a Loving Father still gives divine guidance, and would not leave his sincerely seeking children alone without counsel or direction—and him whose countenance you have seen this morning in conducting this conference—President David O. McKay—we accept and sustain as a prophet of God, as we accept Moses and Abraham, and Peter and Paul, and Isaiah and Elijah or any such others.

It does not seem a strange thing that God would speak to his children in the present as well as he would speak to them in the past. Certainly we do not need his guidance less today. What loving father would hold himself altogether aloof from his sincerely seeking children?

We believe in the literal language of scripture concerning the Fatherhood of God. We believe the language of Genesis which says that God made man in his own image. (Genesis 1:27.) We believe that God is an infinite intelligence with an infinite love for us, not indefinable, but a Father with a father's interest in us. This gives us a peace and purpose in life, a sense of belonging and of not being left alone.

We believe that the glory of God is intelligence; that no man can be saved in ignorance; that the search for truth is an obligation, as is education also; and that there must be freedom for the search.

We believe in the commandments of God; in causes and consequences; in the necessity for living within the law; and that there is real reason for every commandment and requirement.

We believe that the human body should be preserved in health; that it is unwise and ungrateful and unjustifiably foolish to partake of things that impair the fullest well being of the body and effective physical functioning. What is not good for us simply should be left alone.

THE LORD'S BASE OF OPERATIONS

Ezra Taft Benson

of the Council of the Twelve

My brothers and sisters, everywhere:

With joy and gratitude I face you today in, and from, this historic Tabernacle. I am grateful to be here: for this fellowship, for freedom to meet in peace, to speak without fear, to attend this inspirational conference.

I thank God for freedom—the right of choice. I am grateful for this great nation in which we meet. Every true Latter-day Saint throughout the world loves the USA. The Constitution of this land is part of every Latter-day Saint's

religious faith.

To us, this is not just another nation, not just a member of the family of nations. This is a great and glorious nation with a divine mission and a prophetic history and future. It has been brought into being under the inspiration of heaven.

It is our firm belief, as Latter-day Saints, that the Constitution of this land was established by men whom the God of heaven raised up unto that very purpose. It is our conviction also that the

God of heaven guided the founding fathers in establishing it for his particular purpose.

The founders of this republic were deeply spiritual men. They believed men are capable of self-government and that it is the job of government to protect freedom and foster private initiative.

Our earliest American fathers came here with a common objective—freedom of worship and liberty of conscience. Familiar with the sacred scriptures, they believed that liberty is a gift of heaven.

We believe literally in everlasting life, in the eternal perpetuation of personality; that whatever knowledge a man attains to in this life will rise with him in the resurrection; and we believe in a literal resurrection, remembering the words of Pascal, who asked, "Which is more difficult? To be born, or to rise again?"

Birth is a great miracle. Life is a great miracle, and he who gave us life here will give us life everlasting. This we believe.

We believe that all men will be resurrected; that all men in this sense will receive salvation, but that in the hereafter there are different degrees of glory (1 Corinthians 15:22-23, 40-42), entitlement to which will depend upon the life we have lived, and by the living of the law and the keeping of the commandments we shall be entitled to return to live with our Father and go back to him where once we were, to a place of peace and progress, where there will be everlasting life, with family and friends, in a relationship that is everlasting.

Thus we believe in marriage, not only for time but also for eternity, and that we have an inescapable obligation for the children God has given us to teach, to train, and to set before them a righteous example of the living of life.

We believe in the divinity of Jesus the Christ. We believe in the scripture which says that he was in the express image of his Father. (Hebrews 1:3.) We believe that he was born of a virgin, as the scripture says; that he lived, that he preached, that he ministered among men, that he was put to death, that he rose on the third day, that he ascended to his Father, that he will come again on earth to rule and reign.

This is a simple belief. It is a profound one also. It gives peace in life. It gives a sense of everlasting purpose.

To them, man as a child of God, emphasized the sacredness of the individual and the interest of a kind Providence in the affairs of men and nations. These leaders recognized the need for divine guidance and the importance of vital religion and morality in the affairs of men and nations.

To the peoples who should inhabit this blessed land of the Americas, the Western Hemisphere, an ancient prophet uttered this significant promise and solemn warning: "Behold, this is a

It gives the assurance that we are helping to shape our own future with our faith, with our works, with our learning, with our lives. It gives us the assurance that life is purposeful, meaningful, limitless, everlasting; that the gospel was given as a guide to help us realize our highest happiness; that all its ordinances are essential; that authority to administer them is also; and that this authority was again restored in the nineteenth century through Joseph Smith the Prophet, as the heavens were opened and the personality of God again revealed as the Father, pointing to his Beloved Son our Savior, said, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear him!"

In this brief time there is much omitted, but this in essence is the faith that gives us peace and purpose in life and freedom from many of its fears. We believe there are clear-cut answers to life's questions; that much of the groping of life can be eliminated.

In Calcutta, in India, we read in the notebook of a wonderful grandmother an inscription which, among others, she had cherished since she was a young girl—an inscription which India's great poet, Rabindranath Tagore, had written in there for her in his own handwriting: "Surrender your pride to truth."

These lines Tagore also wrote on freedom—freedom for the search and on the importance of such searching—and we have altered a word or two by inserting "me" instead of "my country" in the last line):

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

choice land, 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, . . .

"For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. . . ." (See Ether 2:12, 10.)

Ancient American prophets six hun-

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let . . . [me] awake."

An eminent analyst has said: "I have learned in forecasting economic futures that what is going to happen is already happening." It is so in our lives. It is so everlastingly, and all of us ought to determine our ultimate objectives as early as possible and then faithfully pursue them. Life is not limitless here. Time soon passes. Every man takes himself and what he is with him wherever he goes, and he takes himself also into eternity.

What do we have to lose by indifference, by neglect? In words already cited this morning at an earlier hour, "we have nothing to lose—except everything," and, conversely, we have nothing to gain—except everything.

In the words of Archibald Rutledge: "I am absolutely unshaken in my faith that God created us, loves us, and wants us not only to be good, but to be happy." No man can be indifferent to the issues of life and death. These are uppermost at one time or another in the minds of all of us.

With some awareness of the responsibility of doing so, with myself, my family, and to all men, I would bear witness of the truth of these things, of the everlasting importance of them, of the obligation that all of us have to seek and to search, of the interest that our Loving Father who made us in his image has in us, and of the incalculable importance of the gospel he has given us. I leave with you my witness, in the name of our Lord and Savior, who died that we might live, even Jesus the Christ. Amen.

dred years before Christ foresaw the coming of Columbus and those who followed. These prophets saw the establishment of the colonies, the war for independence, and predicted the outcome. These prophecies are contained in a volume of scripture called the Book of Mormon. This sacred record, a companion volume to the Holy Bible, which it confirms, is an added witness to the divine mission of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Redeemer of the world.

How I wish every American and every

living soul would read the Book of Mormon. I testify to you that it is true. It tells about the prophetic history and mission of America. It gives the comforting assurance that God has kept this great nation, as it were, in the hollow of his hand in preparation for its great mission.

Yes, the Lord planned it all. Why? So America could serve as a beacon of liberty and in preparation for the opening of a new gospel dispensation—the last and greatest of all dispensations in preparation for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. To achieve his purposes the Lord had to have a base of operations. Later he revealed to a modern prophet that the Constitution of this land was established by “wise men” whom the Lord “raised up unto this very purpose.” (See D&C 101:80.) The Lord also directed that the constitutional laws of the land, supporting the principle of freedom, should be upheld and that honest and wise men should be sought for and upheld in public office.

The establishment of this great Christian nation, with a spiritual foundation, was all in preparation for the restoration of the gospel, following the long night of apostasy. Then in 1820 the time had arrived. God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ made their glorious appearance. I give you a few words from the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was the instrument in God’s hands in restoring the gospel and establishing the true Church of Christ again upon the earth. In response to humble prayer Joseph relates: “. . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake

unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (JS 2:16-17.)

To me this is the greatest event that has occurred in this world since the resurrection of the Master—and it happened in America.

Later, other heavenly messengers came to restore the authority of the Holy Priesthood and important keys essential to the opening of the final gospel dispensation. The Church was organized in 1830. Immediately, in response to divine command, missionary-messengers began to carry the important message of salvation throughout the world. It is a world message intended for all of God’s children. And so, once this nation was well established, then the Church was restored and from here the message of the restored gospel has gone forth. All according to divine plan.

This then becomes the Lord’s base of operations in these latter days. And this base will not be shifted out of its place—the land of America. This nation will, in a measure at least, fulfil its mission even though it may face serious and troublesome days. The degree to which it achieves its full mission depends upon the righteousness of its people. God has, through his power, established a free people in this land as a means of helping to carry forward his purposes.

“It was his latter-day purpose to bring forth his gospel in America, not in any other place. It was in America where the Book of Mormon plates were deposited. That was no accident. It was his design. It was in this same America where they were brought to light by angelic ministry. It was” . . . [here] “where he organized his modern Church, where he, himself made a modern personal appearance.” (Editorial, *Church News*.)

Yes, it was here under a free government and a strong nation that protection was provided for his restored Church. Now God will not permit his base of operations—America—to be destroyed. He has promised protection to this land if we will but serve the God of the land. He has also promised protection to the righteous even, if necessary, to send fire from heaven to destroy their enemies. (Ether 2:12, 1 Nephi 22:17.)

No, God’s base of operations will not be destroyed. But it may be weakened and made less effective. One of the first rules of war strategy—and we are at war with the adversary and his agents—is to protect the base of operations. This we must do if we are to build up the kingdom throughout the world and safeguard our God-given freedom.

How will we protect this base of operations?

We must protect this base of operations from every threat—from sin, from unrighteousness, immorality, from desecration of the Sabbath day, from lawlessness, from parental and juvenile delinquency.

We must protect it from dirty movies, filthy advertising, from salacious and suggestive TV programs, magazines, and books.

We must protect this base from idleness, subsidies, doles, and soft governmental paternalism which weakens initiative, discourages industry, destroys character, and demoralizes people.

We must protect this base from complacency—from the dangerous feeling that all is well—from being lulled away into a false security. We must protect this American base from the brainwashing, increasingly administered to our youth in many educational institutions across the land, by some misinformed instructors and some wolves in sheep’s clothing. Their false indoc-

*Sunday Afternoon Session,
April 8, 1962*

NEW EVIDENCE FOR THE BOOK OF MORMON

Mark E. Petersen

of the Council of the Twelve

It is always a great thrill to stand here at this pulpit where the prophets of God stand. It is most humbling to be in the presence of our great president, prophet, seer, and revelator. It is wonderful that we love him as we do and that we sustain him and uphold him, and I humbly and earnestly pray that every one of us may do so all the days of our lives.

It is a glorious privilege to be able to live in a day when there are prophets in the earth, and I am humbly thankful for the privilege of associating with President McKay and all of these wonderful men who surround him. I would like you to know that they are prophets of God, that the Lord guides them,

that they are men without guile, and that they have their whole purpose set in serving the Lord.

So every one of us as Latter-day Saints may place our full and complete confidence in them, and I surely hope and pray that we will do so by keeping the commandments and maintaining the high standards that the Lord has given us.

My wife and I have had a glorious experience in the last month or six weeks. It was a great spiritual uplift to us. One of these great spiritual experiences began with our accompanying Brother and Sister John Longden into the mission home in Samoa one morning about three weeks ago. There we were

met by the little five or six-year-old daughter of President and Sister [J. Phillip] Hanks, who reside in Samoa.

This lovely little child, filled with excitement, ran up to us and said, “I am going to Sauniatu.” We smiled with her and enjoyed her excitement, but we were just as excited as she was, because we were going to Sauniatu, also. We could hardly wait till we got there, just as she.

As we went along in the automobile towards Sauniatu, the mission president told again the story of a tremendous spiritual experience that took place in Sauniatu about forty years ago. President David O. McKay was the central figure in that experience. As we neared

trination, often perpetrated behind the front of so-called academic freedom, is leaving behind many faithless students, socialist-oriented, who are easy subjects for state tyranny.

"At what point, then, is the approach of danger to be expected?" asked Abraham Lincoln, and answered, ". . . If it ever reaches us, it must spring up among us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time or die by suicide." (Springfield, Ill., Jan. 27, 1837.)

The only threat to the liberty and independence of the American people from abroad is the threat of world communism spreading from its base in the Soviet Union. But the best authorities are confident that the Soviets will not provoke a major war. Their economy would not support it.

Lenin said, "The soundest strategy in war is to postpone operations until the moral disintegration of the enemy renders the mortal blow possible and easy." Commenting on Lenin's statement the Indianapolis *Star* adds: "Where then does the real danger lie? It lies with us—the American people. . . .

"Other great civilizations have died by suicide. The first free people, the Greeks, died thus.

"And why did Greece fall: 'A slackness and softness finally came over them to their ruin. In the end more than they wanted freedom they wanted security, a comfortable life, and they lost all—security, comfort and freedom.'

"It is the same with Americans today. The danger that threatens us is an internal danger. It lies in our hearts and minds and not in the hands of Khrushchev.

"It is our own ignorance—ignorance

of our own history and our heritage of liberty that threatens us. It is our ignorance of the true nature of our enemy, socialistic communism, that threatens us. . . . Our own lack of faith in freedom and ourselves, our own lack of confidence in the greatness of America and all that she stands for, morally and materially, is what puts us in mortal danger.

"Too many of us are afraid—afraid of atomic war, afraid of the disapproval of our allies or the neutrals, afraid of the threats and boasts of the bloated tyrants in the Kremlin, afraid to offend others by taking action to defend ourselves."

Yes, we are afraid to live righteously according to eternal principles—economic, moral, and spiritual. This is our danger. We must never forget that nations may—and usually do—sow the seeds of their own destruction while enjoying unprecedented prosperity. As Jenkin Lloyd Jones said, "It is time we hit the sawdust trail. It is time we revived the idea that there is such a thing as sin—just plain old willful sin. It is time we brought self-discipline back into style. . . .

"I am fed up with the educationists and pseudo-scientists who have underrated our potential as a people. . . . I am tired of seeing America debased and low-rated in the eyes of foreigners. I am genuinely disturbed that to idealistic youth in many countries the fraud of Communism appears synonymous with morality, while we, the chief repository of real freedom, are regarded as being in the last stages of decay.

"In this hour of fear, confusion and self-doubt . . . let there be a fresh breeze, a breeze of new honesty, new idealism, new integrity."

To protect this base we must protect

the soul of America—we must return to a love and respect for the basic spiritual concepts upon which this nation has been established. We must study the Constitution and the writings of the founding fathers.

Yes, we must protect the Lord's base of operations by moving away from unsound economic policies which encourage creeping socialism and its companion, insidious, atheistic communism. If we are to protect this important base, we must as a nation live within our means, balance our budgets, and pay our debts. We must establish sound monetary policies and take needed steps to compete in world markets.

If we are to protect this American base, we must realize that all things, including information disseminated by our schools, churches, and government, should be judged according to the words of the prophets, especially the living prophet. This procedure coupled with the understanding which will come through the Spirit of the Lord, if we are living in compliance with the scriptures, is the only sure foundation and basis of judgment. Any other course of action leaves us muddled, despondent, wandering in shades of gray, easy targets for Satan.

We must not fail in these pressing and important matters. We must not fall short of the great mission the Lord has proffered and outlined for America and for his divinely restored Church.

Yes, this is a choice land—a nation with a prophetic history.

God bless America and her leaders, and all the free world. And may God protect his latter-day base of operation that his glorious message of salvation may go forth to all the world, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

the village, we saw the marker which designates the place where he stood as he called down from heaven a great blessing upon that village and upon all of Samoa.

Then we went on into the village, and there we saw the larger monument that has been erected in commemoration of this glorious event and in recognition of the love of the people of Samoa for this great man who has become the president, the prophet, seer, and revealer of this Church.

We were surrounded by the people. We went to the monument and had again recounted the marvelous experience that had made it significant. There came to us a realization that this monu-

ment was also a monument to the great spirituality which is characteristic of so many of the Polynesian people.

We remembered the experiences of Brother Matthew Cowley among those people. You recall how he thrilled us with his faith-promoting stories of the experiences he had had among them. All of this came back to us as we, ourselves, were deeply touched, and we recognized the wonderful things that had lived on in the minds and the hearts of the people there.

As we met with the people in Sauniatu, we prayed with them, we spoke to them, we sang with them, and again recognized that these people were but representative of all of the Poly-

nesian Saints and that the Polynesian Saints are characterized by a tremendous faith.

Why do they have this great faith? It is because these people are of the blood of Israel. They are heirs to the promises of the Book of Mormon. God is now awakening them to their great destiny.

As Latter-day Saints we have always believed that the Polynesians are descendants of Lehi and blood relatives of the American Indians, despite the contrary theories of other men. For that reason, from the beginning of our Church history we have had more than an ordinary interest in them as a people. But now that interest is even more