

Secret Combinations

Gadianton Robbers among the Nephites

When organized	Band #1 — Hela 2:3–5; 6:18. About 50 b.c. among the Nephites in Zarahemla. End in Hela 11:10. Band #2 — Hela 11:26; 3 Ne 1:27–30. End in 3 Ne 5:6. Band #3 — 3 Nephi 7:9. End in 3 Ne 9:9 Band #4 — 4 Ne 1:42.
Major purposes and Objectives’	That “they might murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God.” (Hela 6:23.)
Secret Oaths and Covenants	They “did enter into their covenants and their oaths, that they would protect and preserve one another in whatsoever difficult circumstances they should be placed, that they should not suffer for their murders, and their plunderings, and their stealings.” (Hela 6:21.)
Secret signs and passwords of recognition	“They did have their signs, yea, their secret signs, and their secret words; and this that they might distinguish a brother... that...he should not be injured by his brother, nor by those who did belong to his band....” (Hela 6:22.)
Methods of operation	“And whosoever of those who belonged to their band should reveal unto the world of their wickedness ... should be tried, not according to the laws of their country, but according to the laws of their wickedness....” (Hela 6:24.)
Results	“This Gadianton did prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi.” (Comment by Mormon in Hela 2:13.)

Ezra Taft Benson (Conference Reports, October 1961, pp. 71–72). When all of the trappings of propaganda and pretense have been pulled aside, the exposed hard-core structure of modern communism is amazingly similar to the ancient Book of Mormon record of secret societies such as the Gadiantons. In the ancient American civilization there was no word which struck greater terror to the hearts of the people than the name of the Gadiantons. It was a secret political party which operated as a murder cult. Its object was to infiltrate legitimate government, plant its officers in high places, and then seize power and live off the spoils appropriated from the people. (It would start out as a small group of “dissenters,” and by using

secret oaths with the threat of death for defectors it would gradually gain a choke hold on the political and economic life of whole civilizations.)

The object of the Gadiantons, like modern communists, was to destroy the existing government and set up a ruthless criminal dictatorship over the whole land.

One of the most urgent, heart-stirring appeals made by Moroni as he closed the Book of Mormon was addressed to the gentile nations of the last days. He foresaw the rise of a *great world-wide secret combination* among the gentiles which “... seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries ...” (Ether 8:25. Italics added.) He warned each gentile nation of the last days to purge itself of *this gigantic criminal conspiracy* which would seek to rule the world.

The prophets, in our day, have continually warned us of these internal threats in our midst—that *our greatest threat from socialistic-communism lies within our country*. Brethren and sisters, we don’t need a prophet—we have one—we need a listening ear. And if we do not listen and heed, then, as the Doctrine and Covenants states, “...the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people.” (D&C 1:14.)

The prophets have said that these threats are among us. The Prophet Moroni, viewing our day, said, “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.” (Ether 8:24.)

Unfortunately our nation has not treated the socialistic-communistic conspiracy as “treasonable to our free institutions,” as the First Presidency pointed out in a signed 1936 statement. *If we continue to uphold communism by not making it treasonable, our land shall be destroyed*, for the Lord has said that “... whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold they shall be destroyed....” (Ibid., 8:22.)

The Prophet Moroni described how the secret combination would take over a country and then fight the work of God, persecute the righteous, and murder those who resisted. Moroni therefore proceeded to describe the workings of the ancient “secret combinations” so that modern man could recognize this great political conspiracy in the last days:

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....

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;...

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.... (Ibid., 8:23-25.)

The Prophet Moroni seemed greatly exercised lest in our day we might not be able to recognize the startling fact that the same secret societies which destroyed the Jaredite and decimated numerous kingdoms of both Nephites and Lamanites would be precisely the same form of criminal conspiracy which would rise up among the gentile nations in this day.

The stratagems of the leader of these societies are amazingly familiar to anyone who has studied the tactics of modern communist leaders.

The Lord has declared that before the second coming of Christ it will be necessary to "... destroy the secret works of darkness ..." in order to preserve the land of Zion—the Americas. (2 Ne 10:11-16.)

The world-wide secret conspiracy which has risen up in our day to fulfil these prophecies is easily identified. President McKay has left no room for doubt as to what attitude the Latter-day Saints should take toward the modern "secret combinations" of conspiratorial communism. In a lengthy statement on communism, he said:

... Latter-day Saints should have nothing to do with the secret combinations and groups antagonistic to the constitutional law of the land, which the Lord "Suffered to be established," and which "should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh according to just and holy principles..." (*Gospel Ideals*, p. 306.)

John Taylor (*Journal of Discourses*, 22:142-143.) I am sorry to see *this murderous influence* prevailing throughout the world, and perhaps this may be a fitting occasion to refer to some of these matters. The manifestations of turbulence and uneasiness which prevail among the nations of the earth are truly lamentable. These feelings which tend to do away with all right, rule, and government, and correct principles are not from God, or many of them are not. This feeling of *communism* and nihilism, aimed at the overthrow of rules and men in position and authority, arises from a spirit of diabolism, which is contrary to every principle of the Gospel of the Son of God....

These things are beginning to spread among and permeate the nations of the earth. Do we expect them? Yes. These *secret combinations* were spoken of by Joseph

Smith, years and years ago. I have heard him time and time again tell about them, and *he stated that when these things began to take place the liberties of this nation would begin to be bartered away.* [Italics added.]

George Q. Cannon (*Juvenile Instructor*, XXV:536, August 15, 1890). Among the many signs of the times concerning which the prophets have spoken, there are none scarcely that are of a more threatening character than the *combinations of various kinds* which are being formed in the land. These combinations are ominous of evil. If they go on increasing as they have done for some years past, the consequences to our nation will be of a most serious, not to say dreadful, character.

In Europe, a condition of feeling has arisen, among *socialists*, nihilists, anarchists, and people of this type, that is exceedingly threatening to the governments under which people of this description live. They are agitating, and plotting, and spreading dissatisfaction among all classes.... Thousands of these dissatisfied people from various countries of Europe have flocked to the United States,... filled with these ideas concerning the rights of man. They were uneasy in Europe, because of the distinction which existed between the different classes there. They came over here and they see similar divisions in society in America.... They become agitators of a dangerous character even in this country, where there are no monarchs or nobles. The level of discontent has gradually spread, until combinations of a most formidable character have been formed in this country....

This is a fearful picture, and we may know what the results will be, by reading the predictions of the prophets concerning the last days. Not only will these combinations of labor and capital spread, but combinations also of a political character, looking to the overthrow of governments and to the introduction of anarchy.

ANTIDOTE FOR SECRET COMBINATIONS: RIGHTEOUSNESS

George Washington (Washington Irving, *Life of George Washington* [NY: George P. Putnam, 1860], p. 780.) Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports.—In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism,, who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens.—The mere Politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them.—A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity.... And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure—reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.—It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular

government.

Edmund Burke (*The Works of Edmund Burke* [Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1889], 4:51-52.) Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites—in proportion as their love of justice is above their rapacity;—in proportion as their soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption;—in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels of the wise and good, in preference to the flattery of knaves. Society cannot exist, unless a controlling power upon the will and appetite is placed somewhere; and the less of it here is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.

Brigham Young (*Journal of Discourses* 2:176, 178. Italics added.) Assuredly in the preservation of *virtue, morality, and intelligence she [America] may look for the perpetuity of her free institutions, and the preservation of her liberty.* And in the moment of her disregard of these principles, when wickedness and sin can run riot with impunity, and not moral influence and force enough be found in the people to check it, and walk it under foot, then may she reckon on a speedy downfall. When moral obligations cease to exert an influence, and virtue hides its face, and the unblushing effrontery of sin and foul corruption takes its place, then may the nation consider there is danger. “*When the wicked rule the people mourn.*”

... To serve God and keep His commandments, are first and foremost with me. If this is higher law, so be it. As it is with me, so should it be with every department of the Government; for this doctrine is based upon the principles of virtue and integrity; with it the Government, her Constitution, and free institutions are safe; without it no power can avert their speedy destruction. It is the life-giving power to the government; it is the vital element on which she exists and prospers; in its absence she sinks to rise no more....

In the sincere observances of the principles of true religion and virtue, we recognize the base, the only sure foundation of enlightened society and well-established government.... That city, nation, government, or kingdom which serves not God, and gives no heed to the principles of truth and religion, will be utterly wasted away and destroyed.

Joseph Fielding Smith (Conference Report, April 1943, p. 15. Italics added.) President Calvin Coolidge once said:

Our government rests upon religion. It is from that source that we derive our reverence for truth and justice, for equality and liberality and for the rights of mankind. Unless the people believe in these principles they cannot believe in our government. There are only two main theories of government in the world. One

rests on righteousness and the other on force. One appeals to reason, the other appeals to the sword. One is exemplified in a republic, the other is represented by a despotism.

The government of a country never gets ahead of the religion of a country. There is no way by which we can substitute the authority of law for the virtue of man. Of course we can help to restrain the vicious and furnish a fair degree of security and protection by legislation and police control, but the real reform which society in these days is seeking will come as a result of religious convictions, or they will not come at all. Peace, justice, charity—these cannot be legislated into being. They are the result of Divine Grace.

It is true that a country cannot get ahead of its religion. The higher our ideas, the nearer we observe divine law, and the stronger are our spiritual forces. No Christian country can forsake the divinity of Jesus Christ and not suffer. In those lands in Europe where paganism has superseded the Christian ideals, there is bound to come decay and eventually, if there is no repentance, their former greatness will be forgotten. Jesus said: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46.)

Here is another inspiring thought. It was copied from a panel on the wall in the chapel at Stanford University:

There is no narrowing so deadly as the narrowing of man’s horizon of spiritual things. No worse evil could befall him in his course on earth than to lose sight of heaven; and it is not civilization that can prevent this; it is not civilization that can compensate for it. No widening of science, no possession of abstract truth can indemnify for an enfeebled hold on the highest and eternal truth of humanity.

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Albert E. Bowen (*Constancy Amid Change* [SLC: Deseret News Press, 1944], pp. 41-42.) Nothing but a revolution in human behavior and a reappraisal of what is enduring in values can rescue us from seemingly impending chaos. There must be a reorientation of life around spiritual verities if individual or national integrity is to be saved. This miracle can be brought only in the hearts of men. Laws on the statute books howsoever multiplied can never work it. No amount of force which it is possible for human ingenuity to devise or impose can ever introduce a regenerating influence into the human soul. I know of only one power that can do it, the power of a revived living faith and an acceptance of the anciently declared truth that to be saved man must be born again, purged and cleansed. This is one of the messages of religion to this age.