THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES
Joseph Smith's 19 July 1840 Discourse
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An occasional theme among Latter-day Saints during times of political crisis has been the prediction attributed to Joseph Smith that the U.S. Constitution would one day hang by a thread and that the elders of the Church would at some critical juncture be instrumental in saving it. The source of this statement is thought to be an unpublished address titled, "A Few Items from a Discourse Delivered by Joseph Smith, July 19, 1840," filed in the Joseph Smith Papers in the LDS Church Archives. Written neatly on 8"X12" paper, the document is obviously a copy since it shows none of the usual characteristics of an original report. The paper appears to be of post-Nauvoo vintage, and the handwriting does not correspond to that of any Joseph Smith's known clerks. Nor is there reference in the Prophet's History to his having delivered a discourse on 19 July 1840. Furthermore, at two points in the text, there appears to be a serious problem of continuity, suggesting copyist's errors or some other flaw in the manuscript. Consequently, in the absence of an original text, and without information about its origin and authorship, the reliability of this document has remained somewhat tenuous.

Now, the recent surfacing of the original manuscript from which the foregoing copy was taken not only gives some clarification to the question of reliability but also emphasizes, to students of history, the value of tracing one's information to original sources. The 1840 Joseph Smith discourse is one of four reported longhand in a small notebook (33/4"X51/2") in the handwriting of Martha Jane Knowlton and Howard Coray.

Martha Jane Knowlton was living with her family in Hancock County, Illinois, when the Latter-day Saints began moving there in 1839. She was baptized in January 1840 and, according to one account, was so convinced of Joseph Smith's divine calling that she recorded every discourse she heard him deliver. The Church Historian, George A. Smith, noted that she was more diligent in preserving the Prophet's sayings than any other woman in the Church.2 Martha Jane was nineteen and still single when she recorded the 1840 Joseph Smith address as the first item in her little notebook, but after her marriage to Howard Coray in 1841, she continued to use the book for the same purpose.

Since, by 1840, there was not yet a procedure in the Church for systematically reporting all of Joseph Smith's speeches, many of his addresses were never recorded, and others were preserved only unofficially in the personal writings of lay members.3 In addition, the longhand reports recorded at the time were subject to inherent limitations because of the absence among Church members of sufficiently developed shorthand skills to permit verbatim reporting during Joseph Smith's lifetime. This accounts for the existence of some reports of Joseph Smith speeches that are not referred to in the Prophet's History. The Martha Jane Knowlton report of July 1840 is of this genre.

A comparison of the Knowlton original with the copy in the Joseph Smith Papers shows that the loose pages in the original were copied out of sequence, placing one portion of the discourse out of context and transferring a segment of a later discourse into the text of the July 1840 address. Hence, copies made from the later source are inaccurate.

The July 1840 context suggests that Joseph Smith's comments about the U.S. Constitution were given not long after his return from Washington, D.C., where his appeal for redress for the wrongs heaped upon his people in Missouri had fallen upon deaf ears. The address also gives significant insight into the marvelous anticipations and hopes the Prophet had for Nauvoo in its beginning phase. But, as one looks at the city from a later perspective, it is evident that the prophecies about Nauvoo, like Jackson County before it, were contingent upon human conditions and failings.

The discourse as reported by Martha Jane Knowlton is as follows:

A few Item[s] from a discourse delivered by Joseph Smith July 19 - 1840.

Read a chapter in [Ezekiel] concluding with this saying: And when all these things come to pass and Lo they will come then shall you know that a Prophet hath been among you.

Afterwards read the parable of the 12 olive trees and said speaking of the Land of Zion, It consists of all N[orth] & S[outh] America but that any place where the Saints gather is Zion which every righteous man will build up for a place of safety for his children. The olive trees are 12 stakes which are yet to be built not the Temple in Jackson [County, Missouri] as some suppose. For while the 12 stakes are being built we will be at peace but the Nations of the Earth will be at war.

Our city from the 1st has been for peace and we will continue pleading like the Widow at the feet of the unjust judge but we may plead at the feet of Magistrates and at the feet of Judges, at the feet of Governors and at the feet of senators & at the feet of Pref[s]idents for 8 years it will be of no avail. We shall find no favor in any of the courts of this government. The redemption of Zion is the redemption of all N[orth] & S[outh] America. And those 12 stake[s] must be built up before the redemption of Zion can take place. And those who refuse to gather and build when they are comanded to do so cease to be Saviours of men and are thenceforth good for nothing but shall be cast out and trodden underfeet of men for their transgression, as Reed Peck was when he aplied in the name of an apostate for business in a store in Quincy. They told him that they wanted no apostates round them and showed him the door. At this same store the authorities of this Church could have obtained almost any amount of credit they could have asked.

We shall build the Zion of the Lord in peace until the servants of that Lord shall begin to lay the foundation of a great and high watch Tower and then shall they begin to say within themselves, what need hath my Lord of this tower seeing this is a time of peace &c. Then the Enemy shall come as a thief in the night and scatter the servants abroad. When the seed of these 12
Olive trees are scattered abroad they will wake up the Nations of the whole Earth. Even this Nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to pieces and tumbling to the ground and when the constitution is upon the brink of ruin this people will be the Staff up[on] which the Nation shall lean and they shall bear the constitution away from the very verge of destruction.

Then shall the Lord say, Go tell all my servants who are the strength of mine house, my young men and middle aged &c, come to the Land of my vineyard and fight the battle of the Lord. Then the Kings & Queens shall come; then the rulers of the Earth shall come, then shall all saints come, yea the Foreign saints shall come to fight for the Land of my vineyard for in this thing shall be their safety and they will have no power to choose but will come as a man fleeth from a sudden destruction. But before this the time shall be, these who are now my friends shall become my enemies and shall seek to take my life and there are those now before me who will more furiously pursue me [and] the more dilligently seek my life and be more b[ ]ood thirsty upon my track than ever were the Missouri Mobbers. You say among yourselves as did them of old time, is it I, & is it I? But I know these things by the visions of the Almighty.

But brethren come ye yea come all of you who can come and go to with your sights and build up the cities of the Lord and whosoever will let him come and partake of the poverty of Nauvoo freely for those who partake of her poverty shall also partake of her prosperity. And it is now wisdom in God that we should enter into as compact a city as possible, for Zion and Jerusalem must both be built up before the coming of Christ. How long will it take to do this, 10 years? Yes, more than 40 years will pass before this work will be accomplished and when these cities are built then shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

Now let all who can coolly and deliberately dispose of their property come up and give of their substance to the [poor?] that the hearts of the poor may be comforted and all may worship God together in holiness of heart. Come brethren come all of you. And I prophecy in the name of the Lord that the state of Illinois shall become a great and mighty mountain as [a] city set upon hill that cannot be hid and a great giveth light to the world. The city of Nauvoo als[o] shall become the greatest city in the whole world.

Curse that man who says to his neighbor you are a mean man because you do not believe as I do. I now invite all liberall minded men to come up to Nauvoo and help to build up the city of our God. We are not greatly distressed, no nor ever will be. This is the principle place of gathering therefore let the brethren begin to roll in like clouds and we will sell you lots if you are able to pay for them, and if not you shall have them without money and without price.

The greater blessing is unto those who come in times of adversity. For many will come to us in times of prosperity that will stand at the corners of the streets saying with long pharisial faces to those that come after them: Don't go near Bro. Joseph, don't go near the authorities of the church for they will pick your pockets; they will rob you of all your money. Thus will they breed in our midst a spirit of dissatisfaction and distrust that will end in persecution and distress.

Now from this hour bring every thing you can bring and build a Temple unto the Lord, a house unto the mighty God of Jacob. We will build upon the top of this Temple a great observatory, a great and high watch tower and in the top thereof we will Suspend a tremendous bell that when it is rung shall rouse the inhabitants of Madison, wake up the people of Warsaw, and sound in the ears of men [in] Carthage. Then comes the ancient records yea all of them. Dig them; yes bring them forth speedily.

Then shall the poor be fed by the curious who shall come from all parts of the world to see this wonderful temple. Yea I prophecy that pleasure parties all come from England to see the Mamoth and like the Queen of Sheba shall say the half never was told them. School houses shall be built here and High shools shall be established and the great men of the [earth] shall send their sons here to board while they are receiving their education among us. And even Noblemen shall crave the priviledge of educating their children with us and these poor saints shall chink in their pocket the money of these proud men received from such as come and dwell with us.

Now brethren I obligate myself to build as great a temple as ever Solomon did, if the church will back me up. Moreover, it shall not impoverish any man but enrich thousands. And I prophecy that the time shall be when these saints shall ride proudly over the mountains of Missouri and no Gentile dog nor Missouri dog shall dare lift a tongue against them but will lick up the dust from beneath their feet. And I pray the Father that many here may realize this and see it with their eyes. And if it should be (stretching his hand towards the place and in a melancholy tone that made all hearts tremble) [the] will of God that I might live to behold that temple completed and finished from the foundation to the top stone I will say, Oh Lord it is enough Lord let thy servant depart in peace, which is my earnest prayer in the name of the L[ord] Jesus Amen.
My beloved brethren and sisters, what a glorious blessing to be assembled in another great general conference of the Church. I ask for an interest in your faith and prayers as I speak to you about a subject that is very close to my heart and that affects the worldwide Church.

We have recently celebrated the bicentennial of the signing of the United States Constitution. That commemorated the beginning of a series of events leading up to the ratification of the Constitution, implementation of the government it created, and the writing and ratification of the Bill of Rights. We look forward to the future commemoration of each of these important events during the next four years. It is as a result of these events that we are able to meet today in peace as members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. For this we should all be eternally grateful.

I desire, therefore, to speak to you about our divine Constitution, which the Lord said "belongs to all mankind" (D&C 98:5) "and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles" (D&C 101:77; italics added).

The Constitution of the United States has served as a model for many nations and is the oldest constitution in use today.

"I established the Constitution of this land," said the Lord, "by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose" (D&C 101:80).

For centuries the Lord kept America hidden in the hollow of His hand until the time was right to unveil her for her destiny in the last days. "It is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations," said Lehi, "for behold, many nations would over run the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance" (2 Nephi 1:8).

In the Lord's due time His Spirit "wrought upon" Columbus, the pilgrims, the Puritans, and others to come to America. They testified of God's intervention in their behalf (see 1 Nephi 13:12-13). The Book of Mormon records that they humbled "themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them" (1 Nephi 13:16).

Our Father in Heaven planned the coming forth of the Founding Fathers and their form of government as the necessary great prologue leading to the restoration of the gospel. Recall what our Savior Jesus Christ said nearly two thousand years ago when He visited this promised land: "For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth" (3 Nephi 21:4). America, the land of liberty, was to be the Lord's latter-day base of operations for His restored church.

The Declaration of Independence affirmed the Founding Fathers' belief and trust in God in these words: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The Doctrine and Covenants states, "We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life" (D&C 134:2). Life, liberty, property--mankind's three great rights.

At the conclusion of the Declaration of Independence, they wrote, "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor." This Declaration was a promise that would demand terrible sacrifice on the part of its signers. Five of the signers were captured as traitors and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary War, another had two sons captured. Nine died from wounds or from the hardships of the war. The Lord said He "redeemed the land by the shedding of blood" (D&C 101:80). Nephi recorded that the Founders "were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations" (1 Nephi 13:19).

The years immediately preceding the Constitutional Convention were filled with disappointments and threats to the newly won peace. Washington was offered a kingship, which he adamantly refused. Nephi had prophesied hundreds of years before that "this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land" (2 Nephi 10:11; italics added).

Between the critical years of 1783 and 1787, an outsider viewing the affairs of the United States would have thought that the thirteen states, different in so many ways, could never effectively unite. The world powers were confident that this nation would not last.

Eventually, twelve of the states met in Philadelphia to address the problem. Madison said at the beginning of the Convention that the delegates "were now digesting a plan which in its operation would decide forever the fate of Republican Government" (26 June 1787, Records of the Federal Convention; 1911, 1:423).

"The Lord knoweth all things from the beginning," said Nephi, "wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his words among the children of men" (1 Nephi 9:6).

Four months later, the Convention delegates had completed their work. As Gladstone said, it was "the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man" (William Gladstone, North American Review, Sept. Oct. 1878, pp. 185-86), and the Prophet Joseph Smith called it "a glorious standard. . . a heavenly banner" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938, p. 147).

The delegates were the recipients of heavenly
inspiration. James Madison, often referred to as the father of the Constitution wrote: "It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it a finger of that Almighty hand which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical stages of the revolution" (The Federalist, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1983, no. 37, p. 222).

Alexander Hamilton, famous as the originator of The Federalist papers and author of fifty-one of the essays, said: "For my own part, I sincerely esteem it a system, which without the finger of God, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interest" (Paul L. Ford, Essays on the Constitution of the United States, 1892, pp. 25152).

Charles Pinckney, a very active participant and author of the Pinckney Plan during the Convention, said: "When the great work was done and published, I was struck with amazement. Nothing less than the superintending Hand of Providence, that so miraculously carried us through the war . . . could have brought it about so complete, upon the whole" (Essays on the Constitution, p. 412). Within ten months, the Constitution was ratified by nine states and was therefore in force for them. Prophecy had been fulfilled.

During his first inaugural address in 1789, President George Washington, a man who was raised up by God, said: "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency" (First Inaugural Address, 30 April 1789).

In compliance with Article 6 of the Constitution, the very first act passed by Congress and signed by President Washington on June 1, 1789, was the actual oath to support the Constitution that was to be administered to various government officers.

The dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, as dictated by the Lord and found in the Doctrine and Covenants, contains these words: "May those principles, which were so dictated by the Lord and found in the Doctrine and Covenants, be established forever" (D&C 109:54).

Shortly after President Spencer W. Kimball became President of the Church, he assigned me to go into the vault of the St. George Temple and check the early records. As I did so, I realized the fulfillment of a dream I had had ever since learning of the visit of the Founding Fathers to the St. George Temple. I saw with my own eyes the record of the work which was done for the Founding Fathers of this great nation, beginning with George Washington.

Think of it: the Founding Fathers of this nation, those great men, appeared within those sacred walls and had their vicarious work done for them.

President Wilford Woodruff spoke of it in these words: "Before I left St. George, the spirits of the dead gathered around me, wanting to know why we did not redeem them. Said they, 'You have had the use of the Endowment House for a number of years, and yet nothing has ever been done for us. We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy, and we never apostatized from it, but we remained true to it and were faithful to God' " (The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, sel. G. Homer Durham, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946, p. 160).

After he became President of the Church, President Wilford Woodruff declared that "those men who laid the foundation of this American government were the best spirits the God of heaven could find on the face of the earth. They were choice spirits . . . [and] were inspired of the Lord" (in Conference Report, April 1898, p. 89).

Unfortunately, we as a nation have apostatized in various degrees from different Constitutional principles as proclaimed by the inspired founders. We are fast approaching that moment prophesied by Joseph Smith when he said: "Even this nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to pieces and tumbling to the ground, and when the Constitution is upon 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" (19 July 1840, as recorded by Martha Jane Knowlton Coray; ms. in Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City).

For centuries our forefathers suffered and sacrificed that we might be the recipients of the blessings of freedom. If they were willing to sacrifice so much to establish us as a free people, should we not be willing to do the same to maintain that freedom for ourselves and for future generations?

Only in this foreordained land, under its God-inspired Constitution and the resulting environment of freedom, was it possible to have established the restored church. It is our responsibility to see that this freedom is perpetuated so that the Church may more easily flourish in the future.

The Lord said, "Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land" (D&C 98:6).

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.

The Book of Mormon warns us relative to our living in this free land: "Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever" (2 Nephi 1:7).

"And now," warned Moroni, "we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath come upon them when they are ripened in iniquity" (Ether 2:9).

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).

Third, we must become involved in civic affairs to see that we are properly represented.

The Lord said that "he holds men accountable for their acts in relation" to governments "both in making laws and administering them" (D&C 134:1). We must follow this counsel from the Lord: "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" (D&C 98:10).

I quote Abraham Lincoln: "Let [the Constitution] be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges, let it be written in primers, in spelling books and in almanacs, let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation." We must become involved in civic affairs. As citizens of this republic, we cannot do our duty and be idle spectators. (The Constitution: A Heavenly Banner, pp. 28-29.)

You must keep your honor. You cannot yet speak officially for the country, but you can become informed. You can speak your mind. You may think you can do little about the national economy or the actions of our government and the moral weakness all about us, but we must all remember that the Lord has placed great responsibilities upon the elders of Israel in the preservation of our Constitution.

Many seem to excuse themselves from involvement with the expression "that's politics," but the Constitution was established by men whom the God of Heaven raised up unto that very purpose (see D&C 101:80). It is your charter. It is a charter belonging to every American. No, we may not be fully responsible for deception in others, but we are responsible for ourselves and our activities as citizens in using our influence to see that honest men and wise men are elected to office and that we will uphold "good men and wise men" as the Lord has commanded (D&C 98:10). ("Be True to God, Country, and Self," Young Adult Fireside, Logan, Utah, 11 February 1979.)

Part of the reason we may not have sufficient priesthood bearers to save the Constitution, let alone to shake the powers of hell, is because unlike Moroni, I fear, our souls do not joy in keeping our country free, and we are not firm in the faith of Christ, nor have we sworn with an oath to defend our rights and the liberty of our country (see Alma 48:17). (CR October 1966, Improvement Era 69 [December 1966]: 1145.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith saw the part the elders of Israel would play in this constitutional crisis. Will there be some of us who won't care about saving the Constitution, others who will be blinded by the craftiness of men, and some who will knowingly be working to destroy it? He who has ears to hear and eyes to see can discern by the Spirit and through the words of God's mouthpiece that our liberties are being taken. (God, Note the qualities that the Lord demands of those who are to represent us. They must be good, wise, and honest.

Fourth, we must make our influence felt by our vote, our letters, our teaching, and our advice. 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, 5:286).

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.

Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.622-4
To all who have discerning eyes, it is apparent that the republican form of government established by our noble forefathers cannot long endure once fundamental principles are abandoned. Momentum is gathering for another conflict a repetition of the crisis of two hundred years ago. This collision of ideas is worldwide. The issue is the same that precipitated the great premarital conflict will men be free to determine their own course of action or must they be coerced.

We are fast approaching that moment prophesied by Joseph Smith when he said: "Even this nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to pieces and tumbling to the ground, and when the Constitution is upon 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" (Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, July 19, 1840). (The Constitution: A Heavenly Banner, pp. 27-28.)

President Benson said shortly after President Spencer W. Kimball became president of the Church, "he assigned me to go into the vault of the St. George Temple and check the early records [of the baptism of the Founding Fathers]."

President Ezra Taft Benson was ordained and set apart to his high and holy calling immediately following the death of President Kimball. [Ensign, 53] Could anyone doubt his qualifications for this responsibility? Over the years in public and Church affairs, he had moved with ease among the great of the earth. Since the days of his childhood, he has carried in his heart a deep and unmovable conviction concerning the divinity of this work. He has exercised the authority of the apostleship in his minis [CR, 77]try among the nations. He has spoken prophetically and wonderfully on many things, but his most oft-repeated message to the people of the Church has been, "Read the Book of Mormon."

Why? Because he knows that the reading of this sacred testament will bring us closer to God and that there is no greater need among us than this.

Could there be a call from a prophet more timely than this call? One need only look at the filth and rot that are sweeping over the world in the form of pornographic literature, pornographic movies, pornographic videocassettes, pornographic television to see the need for a great and powerful and moving counterbore for righteousness. Importance of following the prophets

'It go back to the words of Jehoshaphat: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20)

Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 76--77

There are many little things that test our willingness to accept the word of the prophets. Jesus said, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

So it has been through the history of mankind, and so it is today. In our own communities, even here in Utah, we have experienced some of this. President Grant carried to his grave a deep sense of sorrow that, contrary to his counsel, the people of Utah cast the final vote, in 1934, that repealed the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

I am grateful to say that we had a different experience some years ago when we joined with other citizens in a campaign to control the distribution of liquor. There is no question in my mind that great benefits have come as a result of the overwhelming response to direction from our prophet. There was a similar result when it was proposed that an MX Missile site be located here. Under the leadership of President Kimball, we took a position on this matter. I believe that not only were we of this part of the country blessed because of that position, but also the entire nation, and perhaps the world.

Now again, as always, we are faced with public moral issues, this time concerning lotteries, pari-mutual betting, and other forms of gambling. The Presidents of the Church have spoken clearly and unequivocally on these matters.

These are little things, but they are important things. They bring to mind the great contest between the prophet Elijah and the priests of Baal. Said Elijah on that occasion: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).