

The Loss of Divine Guidance in Education

In the following article by Ezra Taft Benson, we read the admonitions of three prophets of the Lord concerning the education of our children.

God, Family, Country

Ezra Taft Benson

The adversary knows “that the home is the first and most effective place for children to learn the lessons of life: truth, honor, virtue, self-control; the value of education, honest work, and the purpose and privilege of life. Nothing can take the place of home in rearing and teaching children, and no other success can compensate for failure in the home.” (Letter of President David O. McKay, Family Home Evening Manual, 1968-69, p. iii.)

Parents are directly responsible for the righteous rearing of their children, and this responsibility cannot be safely delegated to relatives, friends, neighbors, the school, the church, or the state. “I appeal to you parents, take nothing for granted about your children,” said President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. “The great bulk of them, of course, are good, but some of us do not know when they begin to go away from the path of truth and righteousness. Be watchful every day and hour. Never relax your care, your solicitude. Rule kindly in the spirit of the gospel and the spirit of the priesthood, but rule, if you wish your children to follow the right path.” Permissive parents are part of the problem.

As a watchman on the tower, I feel to warn you that one of the chief means of misleading our youth and destroying the family unit is our educational institutions. President Joseph F. Smith referred to false educational ideas as one of the three threatening dangers among our Church members. There is more than one reason why the Church is advising our youth to attend colleges close to their homes where institutes of religion are available. It gives the parents the opportunity to stay close to their children, and if they become alerted and informed, these parents can help expose some of the deceptions of men like Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin, John Dewey, Karl Marx, John Keynes, and others.

Today there are much worse things that can happen to a child than not getting a full education. In fact, some of the worst things have happened to our children while attending colleges led by administrators who wink at subversion and amorality.

Said Karl G. Maeser, “I would rather have my child exposed to smallpox, typhus fever, cholera, or other malignant and deadly diseases than to the degrading influence of a corrupt teacher. It is infinitely better to take chances with an ignorant but pure-minded teacher than with the greatest philosopher who is impure.”

The tenth plank in Karl Marx’s manifesto for destroying our kind of civilization advocates the establishment of “free education for all children in public schools.” There were several reasons why Marx wanted government to run the schools. Dr. A. A. Hodge pointed out one of them when he said: “It is capable of exact demonstration that if every party in the State has the right of excluding from public schools whatever he does not believe to be true, then he that believes most must give way to him that believes least, and then he that believes least must give way to him that believes absolutely nothing, no matter in how small a minority the atheists or agnostics may be. It is self-evident that on this scheme, if it is consistently and persistently carried out in all parts and widespread instrument for the propagation of atheism which the world has ever seen.”

After the tragic prayer decision was made by the U.S. Supreme Court, President David O. McKay stated, “The Supreme Court of the United States severs the connecting cord between the public schools of the United States and the source of divine intelligence, the Creator, himself.” (Relief Society Magazine, December 1962, p. 878.)

Does that make any difference to you? Can't you see why the demand of conscientious parents is increasing the number of private Christian and Americanist-oriented schools?

Now, whether your child attends this type of school or not, it is important that you stay close to your children and review, daily, if possible, what they have learned in school, and go over their textbooks.

President Joseph Fielding Smith stated that in public schools you cannot get a textbook, anywhere that he knows of, on the "ologies" that doesn't contain nonsense. (Take Heed to Yourselves, p. 32.) (Ezra Taft Benson, God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties, 224-227)

As members of the Lord's restored gospel, we believe His words are "the same yesterday, today and forever" (1Nephi 10:18). If we choose to ignore the prophet, claiming his words are outdated or based on his personal opinion, perhaps we should remember the following incident: And it came to pass that they would not suffer that he should enter into the city; therefore he went and got upon the wall thereof, and stretched forth his hand and cried with a loud voice, and prophesied unto the people whatsoever things the Lord put into his heart. (Helaman 13:4)

We might ask ourselves, where would we have found ourselves that day as Samuel stood upon the wall? Would we have listened to his words or would we be among those casting stones and arrows? Simply put, as Latter-day Saints we have made our choice to follow our prophets. We choose not to be found casting stones or shooting arrows at the Samuel's of our day.

As a people, we have been warned by our prophets to beware of false educational ideas and their effects. Among these false ideas are those which exclude the role of Divinity in the founding of our country and the inspired documents that followed. Twenty five years after the warning by President Benson, another warning was issued by Elder Dallin H. Oaks.

The Need of Education on the Role of Religion in a Pluralistic Society

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

As a result of misunderstanding the importance of religious liberty in our Constitutional order, many citizens and even some educators have come to consider it bad taste or even illegal for public school teachers even to mention religious influences or commitments. No wonder we suffer an appalling ignorance of our political and cultural origins.

In a study done for the Department of Education, New York University psychologist Paul Vitz documented the extent to which textbook authors have avoided references to God or to religion. Vitz concluded that many students could never learn from reading their history textbooks "that religion has played a significant role in American history." For example:

- One American history textbook defines pilgrims as "people who make long trips." Another text lists three hundred important events in American history, and only three of the three hundred have anything to do with religion. No religious event is listed after 1775 – an apparent judgment that each of the other items, including the appearance of an electric streetcar on the streets of Richmond, Virginia, in 1886, was more important than any religious event in America since 1775.
- A reader for sixth-graders includes an Isaac Singer story in which a boy with a problem prays to God for himself and his goat, and when the problem is resolved, the boy thanks God. But the public school text omits the name of God and declares that the boy thanks "goodness."
- Textbook discussions of pre-Civil War abolitionism and the recent civil rights movement commonly skim over or totally omit the religious origins of these great forces and the religious motivations of many who furthered them.

Removing the name of God and ignoring the influence of religious motivations, distort facts and cloud understanding. If gold were someone's God (and there are such people), could you give an accurate account of the western U.S. settlements attributable to the Gold Rush without mentioning the world gold?

The Williamsburg Charter Foundation is not the first group to call for more public school study about religion. In a 1986 editorial, the Washington Post called attention to a study by People for the American Way, which showed that American history textbooks hardly mention religion as a force in U.S. history. (Dallin H. Oaks, "Religion in Public Life," Ensign, July 1990, 7)

The United States-Built upon Divine Inspiration

Once we start to recognize a problem exists, the question surfaces: What are we to teach our children? There are as many variations of what and how each child should be taught as there are children, but we have been given a set of basics, at least in history, for LDS students. The following thirteen points were given to us by President Ezra Taft Benson:

In Memoriam

Ezra Taft Benson

First: Prophecy is abundant that God deliberately kept the American continent hidden until after the Holy Roman Empire had been broken up and the various nations had established themselves as independent kingdoms. Keeping America hidden until this time was no accident. (2 Nephi 1:6, 8)

Second: At the proper time, God inspired Columbus to overcome almost insurmountable odds to discover America and bring this rich new land to the attention of the gentiles in Europe. (1 Nephi 13:12)

Third: God revealed to his ancient American prophets that shortly after the discovery of America there would be peoples in Europe who would desire to escape the persecution and tyranny of the Old World and flee to America. (1 Nephi 13:13-16)

Fourth: God told his prophets that the kingdoms in Europe would try to exercise dominion over the people who had fled to America, but that in the wars for independence the American settlers would win. (This is a remarkable prophecy in that 2,300 years before the Revolutionary War was fought, God through his prophets predicted who would win.) (Ibid., 13:160-19)

Fifth: The prophets were told that in the latter days when the gentiles came to America they would establish it as a land of liberty on which there would be no kings. The Lord declared that he would protect the land and whosoever would try to establish kings either from within or without would perish. (2 Nephi 10:8-14)

Sixth: Having declared America to be a land of liberty, God undertook to raise up a band of inspired and intelligent leaders who could write a constitution of liberty and establish the first free people in modern times. The hand of God in this undertaking is clearly indicated by the Lord himself in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith in these words, "...I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose..." (D&C 101:80)

Seventh: God declared that the United States Constitution was divinely inspired for the specific purpose of eliminating bondage and the violation of the rights and protection which belongs to "all flesh." (Ibid., 98:5-10)

Eighth: God placed a mandate upon his people to befriend and defend the constitutional laws of the land and see that the rights and privileges of all mankind are protected. He verified the declaration of the founding fathers, that God created all men free. He also warned against those who would enact laws encroaching upon the sacred rights and privileges of free men. He urged the election of honest and wise leaders and said that evil men and laws were of Satan. (Ibid., 98:5-10)

Ninth: God predicted through his prophets that this great gentile nation, raised up on the American continent in the last days, would become the richest and most powerful nation on the face of the earth; even “above all other nations.” (1 Nephi 13:15, Ether 2:12)

Tenth: Concerning the United States, He revealed to his prophets that its greatest threat would be a vast, worldwide “secret combination: which would not only threaten the United States but also seek to “overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations.” (Ether 8:25)

Eleventh: In connection with an attack on the United States, the Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith there would be an attempt to overthrow the country by destroying the Constitution. Joseph Smith predicted that the time would come when the Constitution would hang, as it were, by a thread, and at that time “this people will step forth and save it from the threatened destruction.” (Journal History, Brigham Young’s Speech, July 4, 1854)

Twelfth: The Lord revealed to the Prophet Nephi that he established the gentiles on this land to be a free people forever, that if they were a righteous nation and overcame the wickedness and secret abominations which would arise in their midst, they would inherit the land forever. (1Nephi 14:1-2)

Thirteenth: But on the other hand, if the gentiles on this land reject the word of God and conspire to overthrow liberty and the Constitution, then their doom is fixed, and they “...Shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant.” (1 Nephi 14:6; 3 Nephi 21:11, 14, 21; D&C 84:114-115, 117) (Ezra Taft Benson, In Memoriam, 36-37)

Brigham Young taught that Latter-day Saints would carry a significant responsibility in the future of America. During an Independence Day speech, he referred to a statement by the prophet Joseph Smith concerning the role of the LDS people at a time when Constitutional principles will be in danger:

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. (Gerald N. Lund, *The Coming of the Lord*, 57.)

The question we would ask the readers of this text is the following: If you were the “single thread” referred to by Joseph, how secure would the Constitution be?

Students, the effectiveness of this book, *Threads of Liberty*, in your life is up to you. The principle of agency is a theme often repeated throughout these pages. The writers of this book, your parents and teachers cannot force you to learn. That decision is completely up to you. When it is all said and done, you and you alone must answer Brigham’s question. The question is not whether the Constitution will be destroyed. Brigham Young assures us that it will not. The question you must answer is whether you will be one of the “threads.”

Review Questions

1. Explain how the decline in interest and knowledge about history and government might impact our country’s political future.
2. Explain Karl Maeser’s statement, “I would rather have my child exposed to smallpox, typhus fever, cholera, or other malignant and deadly diseases than to the degrading influence of a corrupt teacher.”
3. Explain how omitting religion from textbooks can and does affect us as society.
4. How do President Benson’s thirteen points of history affect how we view our Constitution, our government and our country?
5. Will you accept the challenge to be one of the threads upholding the Constitution?
Memorize Joseph Smith’s statement:

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.