

PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES

Current Initiatives

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Today I want to talk about some of the challenges and initiatives going on with religious freedom. Let me start with the challenges and headlines I’ve picked up—some from the last week or so:

India: Supreme court rules against a Muslim schoolboy. (They don’t want the Taliban coming to India.)

Egypt: Bahá’í villagers attacked in their homes.

Saudi Arabia: Shi’ite cleric threatens secession over treatment of Saudi Shi’ites.

Morocco: Government clamps down on Shi’ite Islam. Five foreign Christian women deported for proselytizing.

China: China cracks down on Muslims in the western provinces. (Of course, they've been doing this with Tibet.)

Armenia: New draft law in Armenia requires five hundred adult members for registration of religious organization.

Uzbekistan: Four Protestants jailed and three detained for impermissibly gathering for religious purposes. (They admitted to going into someone's home to talk about religion.)

Headlines like those are coming in, and we're trying to develop a website that can easily serve as an umbrella clearinghouse for them. If you get stories, send them to us. I don't have our site address, but you can find it easily. Look up "law and religion" on Google, and we're usually in the top five or six results.

We saw an extraordinary opening of the world to religious freedom in 1990, particularly with the collapse of most of the Communist world. What we're seeing now is a significant retrenchment, although it's somewhat of a mixed picture. It's interesting to bear in mind that there are free countries, or countries with high degrees of religious freedom, on every continent. Based on some rankings done by Freedom House and the Hudson Institute, you can come up with analyses of different places.

In Asia, we have Japan, South Korea, and Mongolia. In Latin America, there are several countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Guatemala. The African countries are Botswana, Mali, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa. More interesting in the rankings by Freedom House and the Hudson Institute are that some of the foregoing countries score higher than Belgium, France, Germany, and Greece. (Greece is less surprising if you know about Greece.)

One of the implications about this is that, to quote Paul A. Marshall, "there are absolutely no grounds for thinking that religious freedom is an exclusively Western concern or achievement." Now there is no doubt that some of the basic ideas and constitutional history started in the West. But this is, with great credibility, an issue about which there is universality—particularly among those who feel they need the protection.

Religious freedom is not a "quasi-luxury" that needs to be advanced "only after more basic needs such as food and shelter have been achieved."

For example, Senegal is not exactly a rich country; it's a Muslim country and a place where there is substantial religious freedom.

Another quote from Marshall: "It is a moral travesty of the highest order to maintain that because people are hungry or cold, it is legitimate to repress their beliefs as well." That's an important thing to bear in mind, because sometimes people make the argument that religious freedom, civil rights, or human rights are things that one can add on later. It turns out that people who are hungry and cold often care about religion—often more than others. Indeed, one thing I've thought a lot about is the many ways we can give service—through humanitarian aid and other ways that open doorways. Remember how significant religious freedom is to people. We are saving many lives from measles and from various kinds of infant diseases, while many of the children in these countries will grow up without religious freedom. You have to think about priorities and what is ultimately going to be important.

It turns out that it's worth looking at the relationship of religious freedom and what the prevailing religion is in the country. Not surprisingly, there's a high correlation between countries with Christianity as a prevailing religion or culture and religious freedom. One particular study surveyed about half of the countries in the world, and of the countries rated as "religiously free," thirty-five are traditionally Christian. Only two Christian countries (Cuba and Belarus) are listed on the "not free" list in the analysis. Other free countries include Israel and countries with largely Buddhist backgrounds, such as Japan, Mongolia, and Thailand. Buddhist countries with weak religious freedom typically have a communist or nationalist background, such as China, Tibet, Laos, North Korea, Vietnam, and Myanmar. It will not come as a surprise that some of the countries without religious freedom are often Islamic, but not always; as indicated, there are exceptions. Of the twenty "un-free" countries surveyed, twelve are Muslim. It's worth noting that there are Muslim countries with a high or moderate degree of religious freedom, like Senegal and Indonesia. Religious freedom is stronger in Muslim areas outside of the Arab world and the Middle East. There is a diaspora effect, and I know that some of the areas we have been focusing on are the diaspora areas of Islam. Often, constraints on religious freedom do not reflect governmental will to regulate,

but they do reflect communal tensions, widespread societal religious violence, and religiously based terrorism. This is an issue in many countries that have real security problems, and it is faced by a lot of countries in the world as they wrestle with how to deal with the upswing of religious extremism.

Then we come to the veneer of liberty. One thing that is interesting and important to remember is how fast things can turn. I remember in the early '90s going to dinner one night with a friend from Yugoslavia, who I taught with for many years. He and his wife remembered the civil war breaking out in Yugoslavia, and they were talking about watching their country unravel right before their eyes—seeing friends suddenly become enemies. Proposition 8 is obviously not on the same scale, but many of us have been surprised to see the intensity of the reaction. I know for me that it's the first time in my life that I started feeling that there might be risks of mob violence that I had only read about growing up in the early history of the Church. I had an article in the Salt Lake Tribune published about me about a week or so ago, and I read some of the comments that came in on the website. What was amazing to me was how virulent they were. We need to bear in mind the veneer.

In March, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe had a special meeting on the persecution of Christians. We tend to not think of that as a major problem, but in many parts of the world it is a major problem. Significantly, much of the persecution is not Muslim versus Christian persecution, but a Christian versus Christian persecution. So this is not altogether a wonderful story. But these are legitimate realities.

I tend to think that religious freedom faces constant forces of attrition—like a mountain peak exposed to wind and weather and unrelenting forces of erosion. The erosion starts happening all of the time for a lot of different reasons—these are the things we are seeing. Let me describe the different types of problems.

A very typical problem legally around many parts of the world is getting initial registration of the legal entities through which religious organizations do their work. One of the very significant developments in the past decade, at least in European space, has been the emergence of a series of European court decisions that make it very clear that religious

communities have a right to legal entity status. I've been involved with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in reviewing a lot of other legislation in central Asia. Some of these places don't think about that; they think they are free of regulation in these organizations—the way they always have been. This has been a big problem; it's a practical matter when we talk about opening the doors of nations, and it really means getting legal registration for legal entity status.

I would say another major wave of issues coming has to do with land-use issues. These problems arise everywhere. We certainly have them in the United States. We never have a temple project go forward anywhere that doesn't encounter opposition that will take this kind of form. These issues are going to become more significant and more complex because they are always local and are managed at the local level. Think about the fact that we have sixty-seven thousand municipalities in the United States. You don't pass one zoning ordinance in the United States; you have sixty-seven thousand of them. This is true for every other major country. This means there is a constant and immense challenge. And very often, religious communities—especially unpopular ones—are the ones that face risks. This will be hidden in various ways; there are a lot of phone calls from churches and from other people. We are also seeing, particularly in Asia, proliferation of antiproselytizing laws.

There are huge issues in the field of education with respect to both the religious and educational impact that is on children with minority backgrounds. There are issues of religious clothing that people can wear, in cases about headscarves in Turkey, France, and elsewhere.

Another recurrent problem, particularly for small religious groups, is disruption of religious services. Discrimination in all forms is significant. Interestingly, there was a case last week in the European court holding that Austria had discriminated against the Jehovah's Witnesses because the Jehovah's Witnesses didn't get a higher form of recognition in the country—a form of recognition that the LDS Church has in Austria. Their ministers could not get ministerial exemptions, and this was a form of discrimination. This is actually quite significant because it means that some of the discrimination coming from the multichurch recognition systems that are very prevalent in Europe may be challenged.

The following are some general trends that I want to highlight—some things happening that we need to watch for.

FREE EXERCISE REDUCTIONISM

There is an increasing tendency in a lot of countries to argue that we don't really need religious freedom anymore. We can stretch freedom of speech, freedom of association, and nondiscrimination norms, and if we add those up, we certainly don't need religious freedom anymore. My sense is that the stretching of the other norms is not going to be the same; moreover, there is something about the age and long-term legitimacy in something like the religious freedom norms that makes it very significant. But this is a trend that is happening that needs to be watched.

SECURITY PROBLEMS WITH ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

Another problem is the tension between religious freedom and security. No one doubts that there are situations where security is concerned that threaten the physical safety or health of public workers. One thing that happened after 9/11 is this kind of an excuse for overreactions that virtually always have the effect of making life more difficult for religious groups. In central Asia, there are legitimate concerns about groups who are calling for the overthrow of governments based on religious means. It's a little hard to know what this means. There are groups calling for the restoration of the Caliphate returning to early Muslim history. Most of us believe there will be a Second Coming, and that will change governments. We would hope that the government officials are not going to use that as a claim that we are trying to undermine the country. But the nexus is a little closer with some of these Muslim groups, and this creates difficult problems; it's in the background for people working on legislation.

DEFAMATION OF RELIGION

Some of you will be aware that the UN has just passed a resolution on defamation of religion. In principle, defaming or speaking ill of other

religions is not a thing to be encouraged. We try to train our missionaries to be respectful of others. But this is a more insidious problem. In effect, a number of the Muslim countries—and there have been resolutions like this going on for about ten years now—in which resolutions call for countries to impose penal sanctions for defamation of religion. Number one, with defamation you can have the tort of defamation of a person. It's a lot harder to know what it means when you are defaming a religion. The real risk is that this will be used particularly in a lot of Muslim countries to restrict speech about religion from both people outside the Muslim tradition and from the Nordic roots within the Muslim tradition. So there are tremendous risks that this will undermine a variety of freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of religious expression.

FAILURE TO TAKE RELIGION SERIOUSLY

There is a book by an individual named Tom Farr, who was very involved in setting up the current regime of doing country reports on religion every year. But he has written a book in which he argues—among other things—that some of the basic schools of thought that shape the way we think about foreign policy in the United States are realism, international law or international idealism formulations, and also neoconservatism. All three of those defined the major approaches to thinking about foreign policy in various ways that filter out religion and tend to not take it seriously. This is in a world where it has become clear that the secularization thesis no longer holds—or if it does hold, it's only in Europe. Religion has emerged as a major force of public life, and to simply ignore it or not notice what a significant factor it is or to not be in a position to deal with that effectively is a problem.

LOSS OF PRESUMPTION IN FAVOR OF RELIGION

We are seeing charges of extremism and narrowness. The abuse scandals undermine the credibility of religion; mounting forces on the atheist side are questioning religion. All of these things are having a cultural effect—a kind of presumption in favor of religion that helps to anchor. Religious freedom is being undermined.

These are some of the problems. It's worth underscoring how significant religious freedom is to us as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but also to people of many other faiths. I have always thought the following statement by Elder Bruce R. McConkie was a fairly radical one, and only someone like Elder McConkie could have said it: "Freedom of worship is one of the basic doctrines of the gospel. Indeed, in one manner of speaking it is the most basic of all doctrines, even taking precedence over the nature and kind of being that God is, or the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, or the vesting of priesthood and keys and saving power in the one true church. By this we mean that if there were no freedom of worship, there would be no God, no redemption, and no salvation in the kingdom of God."¹

That's pretty strong. Now, he did not say it's the most important doctrine. Any of those on the list are more important. He said that it's the most basic doctrine, because without freedom, none of the other things can be done. And that is one of the fundamental things that we need to bear in mind.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM

On a belt across the middle of the world of Islam and out into China, there is no constitutional protection and religious freedom protected. Not surprising are the countries where we have little or no formal LDS presence. This is because we believe in going through the front door, as President Gordon B. Hinckley used to say. As I remember, Jim Toronto used to say, "In a lot of the Muslim countries there isn't a front door, or a back door, or even a tunnel." But again, this emphasizes the significance of religious freedom. One of the LDS members in Brussels right now spoke to me once about how religious freedom is a forerunner carrying the gospel to all nations. It's needed to protect from persecution, but more than that, it's important in ways that are not obvious for the general well-being of society. There has been a lot of empirical work going on over the past few years validating the significance of religious freedom to societies at large.

I have a chart intended to show that there is a high degree of correlation between religious freedom and a number of other social goods.

Now, it is no surprise that religious freedom will line up with things like freedom of speech, freedom of association, and other typical civil liberties because these things overlap in intimate ways. What is less obvious is that religious freedom also has high degrees of correlation with better health and education. With the consolidation of democracy, recipient democracies tend to correlate with better incomes for women—and for men as well, by the way. With economic freedom comes a reduction in conflicts. Some of this is stating things in another way, but there is strong correlation with the presence of other fundamental freedoms. The longevity of democracy—if you look at how long democracy lasts in places—helps anchor democracy. Where religious freedom is high, there are fewer incidences of armed conflict, there are better health outcomes, higher levels of earned income, better educational opportunities, and higher overall human development as measured by UN human development indexes.

Now, correlation is not the same as causation, but there are a lot of reasons for thinking that religious freedom is a causal contributor for other social goods. Religious competition results in increased religious participation. Religious participation levels lead to a variety of positive outcomes.

Brian Grim is one of the leading figures in endocrine research. He talks about the religious freedom cycle, in which religious freedom leads to broader participation, which in turn leads to various positive contributions that makes things work better in societies. What follows are examples of things that have been researched in 143 countries that show religious violence is lower if there are no barriers to religious competition. Countries without restrictions on conversion have higher levels of fundamental freedoms.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Members and regular attendees of religious congregations, either membership or people who actually go to religious meetings regularly, give larger amounts to charities. Not surprisingly, they give larger amounts to religious organizations, but they also give to other secular organizations. The same is true for volunteer activities. One thing that religion seems to

be associated with is greater social capital. On the flip side, there is the religious violence cycle. If you have social restrictions on religion, it leads to government restrictions, and this often exacerbates tensions and leads to more restrictions. If you have the opposite of religious liberty, you will have negative overall effectiveness on social capital.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Let me shift and talk about initiatives. First, let me talk about general things that are going on. One thing that is quite interesting is this new process of Universal Periodic Reviews. George Jarvis, who has been one of the people working on government relations issues in Geneva, did a study that helped track and see what was happening in this Universal Periodic Review, which is a new process. Every five years, every country in the UN gets reviewed for their human rights record. What you have to understand is that this review puts countries under scrutiny, and in many ways it's that kind of scrutiny and public press that the critics of government get involved in and have had some of the maximum human rights compliance effects in. That's a significant development to see the kind of role that someone from here is contributing.

Similarly, we're seeing more countries accept the jurisdiction of the Human Rights Committee—if there are human rights violations, cases go there. The European Court of Human Rights has jurisdiction stretching from Ireland to Vladivostok, and that is a pretty effective jurisdiction. This is the major human rights court of the world and has tremendous persuasive authority beyond its jurisdictional limits.

Another organization less known is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. I serve on an advisory council for freedom of religion and most of the legislation on religion issues, particularly focused east of Vienna. In general, everything from Vancouver to Vladivostok comes before our panel to review.

At a practical level here, let me give you a quick picture of some of the things we've been doing. The International Center for Law and Religion Studies was established on 1 January 2000. We thought this would be a good millennial date. We didn't have any meetings. The budget kicked in on that day, and it's a memorable date. This institutionalized the activities

of a number of us working on these issues. A permanent endowment has been authorized, and we are making good progress on that—although that’s good in this past year, as you can imagine.

The mission of the center is to “help secure the blessings of freedom of religion and belief for all people by expanding, deepening, and disseminating knowledge and expertise regarding the interrelationship of law and religion; facilitating the growth of networks of scholars, experts, and policy makers involved in the field of religion and law; and contributing to law reform processes and broader implementation of principles of religious freedom worldwide.” One of the things we have learned is that worldwide there is a very restricted set of people who work all the time on these issues. These are people who are in formal offices, people with “the stamp,” as Elder Wickman said—the people that actually give approvals. There are academics who give reports that will train the people with the stamp, or give those reports and recommendations. When we think of countries, we often speak of about ten thousand. I don’t know what the actual number is, but this is a relatively finite number of people. And one of the things that we’ve been working on is developing a network and relationships and doing the kind of scholarly and academic research that can be of service to these people.

If you think about the gateways to nations, there are legal gateways—that is, religious association laws and visa regulations—and there are the gatekeepers—officials, religious leaders, human rights workers, and academics. And if we can reach those people, we can have a very significant effect on world religion policy.

Many of you are aware that we hold an annual conference here every fall. We typically bring in seventy to eighty officials from different countries. Some are academics, and some are government officials. This has an extraordinary effect. We’ve brought about seven hundred people, so we are getting close to a tenth of that ten thousand. These people rotate in office, so it will be an ongoing issue. If I hadn’t seen the impact this has on people’s lives, it would be hard to believe. What comes to my mind is the following story. My son was a missionary in Albania. One year, we had the head of religious affairs from Albania with us. It was the year the LDS Conference Center was opened, and we took him to general conference.

And this person said afterward, “In my country, people line up for bread. I’ve never seen people line up for religion before.” In a lot of ways, people are moved. I have a friend from Romania who was the head of religious affairs. In his country, we worked on a number of drafts with him. He came to our conference, and he has gone to some of the conferences in Europe. One time, he took me into his home, and I saw that he was a devout Orthodox believer. His wall was covered with Orthodox icons. He took one down and gave it to me. It was an iconic graphic representation of the Mount of Transfiguration. He said, “This is what working with the center has meant to me.”

We do a lot of other conferences. Over the past three years, the center has helped sponsor and has participated in over seventy conferences in all parts of the world. It’s too expensive to bring everyone here. We can do a lot of regional training; we’ve had a lot of experience in doing that in different parts of the world. One thing we are working on is trying to build a global religious freedom community. And with modern web tools—as we move from the 1.0 world, which was sort of static databases, to the more interactive world that we’re seeing with the next generation, which is social networking and other kinds of software—we have a potential for getting in touch with, staying in touch with, and being of service to this sort of elite group who really shapes and molds religion policy in the world.

We think this will enhance the ability of law and religion specialists to improve local implementation of international religious freedom standards. It will gather and disseminate information that will enhance public awareness of religious freedom issues. And, as a practical matter, it will help us to stay in touch with people, building a global community where people can talk with each other in improved performance.

One of the realities of religious freedom is that there are some very dark forces working against us. However, we have allies that are honorable and just people on this earth. My experience is that many of them find their ways in these offices—not all. Some are hardcore, problematic characters working for the other side. But there are a lot of wonderful people that can be shown better ways of doing things.

Let me give a couple of other examples of things that we are doing to interact internationally. We just got back from Nepal, where we’ve been

working on the new constitution that is being drafted there. It was a fairly incredible experience. We had about three hundred people come to a conference, some of whom had to walk a couple of days to get to an airport where they could then fly into Katmandu, where the conference was. One of the things we've done is set up a website that's using a common format. It's sort of a common front page that can have local identity, and ultimately this is going to be coordinated with people at a law school in Katmandu. But in the meantime, it's a place where we can make information available to those working on the constitution.

Another similar initiative is in the European Court of Human Rights where you can intervene in cases if you are an affected party or if you have some special expertise, but there is nothing like the amicus practice that is very common in the United States. If you have a big church-state case in this country, you'll get a stack of briefs—more than any Supreme Court judge wants to read, I'm sure. Some of these are more valuable than others, but a lot of them are valuable. When the Turkish headscarf case was argued in the European Court of Human Rights, the Turkish regime in power at that time was more sympathetic to religion. They wanted to lose the case, so they told their counsel to describe the facts and sit down. The woman involved was a medical student, and she didn't have money for expensive lawyers. The court got very little guidance and decided the case on the basis, I would say, of some French stereotypes. Coming out of that experience, a number of us, mostly Europeans (I happened to be involved because I am on a panel with some other people involved) came to the conclusion that we ought to find a way that we could make academic, higher-level commentary available in an expedited manner—much faster than you can usually get things in law reviews that might be helpful to resolve cases like this. One of the next grounds is going on right now. There is a bevy of cases in Germany involving religious employment. One of the cases is a Mormon case; there are a couple of Catholic cases, a Salvation Army case, and a couple of Protestant cases. These cases will affect religious employment from Ireland to Vladivostok, and this is profoundly important to us. We are in the process of doing similar things that we hope will have an impact. We've already had meetings with some of the people arguing the cases, and this is a significant initiative.

We are expanding our ability to take advantage of volunteers, and some of you here may be in a position to be helpful. We need interdisciplinary area studies experts. We know we have some legal expertise, but it needs to be matched with people who have in-depth knowledge of what is going on in countries and cultures. We have a tremendous need for help with computer technology that can lift us into the next generation so that we can really find the tools to be in steady contact with the religion experts of the world. But, of course, the computers alone can't do it. What we are, in effect, working on, as I see it, is helping to befriend country after country, and we need people to nurture those relationships.

Now let me speak of another level of initiatives. For me, this comes out of listening to general conference. I remember early in my career going to a talk that Elder Maxwell gave to a small group in Salt Lake City on the Prophet Joseph Smith's birthday. He talked about all the things the Prophet went through in his life, all the persecutions. Then Maxwell talked about some of the hardships of the early Saints, like the Martin handcart company. And then he said, "All the easy things have been done. What lies ahead are times of high adventure. And the new high adventure will be more cerebral; it will be different. But it will be equally hard and challenging and intensive." Some of the work we've been doing is part of that high adventure. Many of you are doing it in other aspects of your lives. One of the other initiatives we heard over the past weekend is people calling us to move to another level. It's like the "lengthen your stride" speech from President Kimball's era.

Elder Andersen said, "We live in a day of destiny." He talked about new pioneers. Elder Christofferson talked about covenant power. President Uchtdorf talked about focus. Elder Bednar talked about the fire of the covenant. We will not do what needs to be done without drawing on higher power. One of the initiatives we've all heard that is going on is the call for us to do the things so that we can have access to the higher powers that are going to be needed. In a priesthood meeting, I was sitting by Bill Atkin, and he pointed out the following scripture: "Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother

of abominations.”²² I remember going to an institute class that was taught by Elder Marion D. Hanks in which he made it quite clear that there are a lot of Mormons who are going to be surprised at whose church they are in. It was pretty sobering. In 1 Nephi it states, “I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions . . . were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore.”²³

The religious liberty situation we as Latter-day Saints are in is described exactly in that verse. We are small; we are less than one thousandth of the population in most parts of the world. We are likely to remain small even if we grow at the staggering rates Rodney Stark has projected. We are going to need religious freedom, and we are going to need to work with others to preserve it.

The following verse is a little further on in the same chapter in 1 Nephi: “And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”²⁴ When we see that, we will be a part of it—if we live for it. I read recently the book that Kim Clark has done called *Armor*. It has meant a lot to me because I’ve known Kim since college days. The book is about putting on the whole armor of God. It’s about people like Kim Clark six to seven years ago, before he left Harvard Business School for BYU–Idaho. He was relatively busy—a bishop, dean of Harvard Business School, leader of a funding campaign—and realized he needed greater spiritual depth in his life. He woke up one morning and read the following scripture: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”²⁵

There is darkness out there, but there are also people who we can work with. One of the things the International Society in particular knows about is the Ammon model. I remember early as a young law professor being impressed that some of our students—not all, but some—would go out to difficult places to live. I’ve known some of them; I know the people

who opened Kazakhstan. I know some of the people of these other countries. I got to know many of you out in some of those places, so I know you know what I'm talking about. Those of us who have felt the high adventure of international work know what it means for the Church to have a special responsibility.

A few years ago, I climbed Mount Timpanogos in Utah. This may have been a mistake; I'm very glad I took my children with me. It turns out I have an acute fear of heights, so this was a very hard day. But I remember going by a waterfall and remarking to my kids, "You know, life is a lot like that. The Lord has waterfalls for us, and we can't absorb it."

The Doctrine and Covenants states, "God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now. . . . As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints."⁶

One of my favorite scriptures is this passage at the end of the Words of Mormon: "And there were many holy men in the land, and they did speak the word of God with power and with authority. . . . Wherefore, with the help of these, king Benjamin . . . did once more establish peace in the land."⁷

This is another example that I like, found in 3 Nephi: "And there began to be men inspired from heaven and sent forth, standing among the people in all the land, preaching and testifying boldly."⁸

I don't know all the ways we are supposed to do things. I've learned something about the importance of religious freedom and the initiatives that we can take in very practical ways that will make a global difference. I believe that we will see many people in the kingdom find different ways to do that, and I am convinced—and it's been one of the reasons I've been such a supporter of the International Society—that the people who have international experience in the Church will play a deep role in making that go forward. And this is one of the powerful initiatives. I pray that we'll be recommitted to push ourselves to deepen our commitments so that we will have access to the powers that we are going to need to move forward with these great things.

NOTES

1. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 655.
2. 1 Nephi 14:10.
3. 1 Nephi 14:12.
4. 1 Nephi 14:14.
5. Ephesians 6:11–12.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 121:26, 33.
7. Words of Mormon 1:17–18.
8. 3 Nephi 6:20.