**Paragraph 1**

George Washington offers general counsel at the end of his address, after communicating 3 primary points. He initially asserts that geographical sectionalism can hinder the interest of a nation as it may foment division and be exploited by designing men, seeking power. He admonishes the avoidance of political parties. He also warns against external and internal threats utilizing artifice and deceit to subvert the unity we have through liberty and effectual government. One of these counsels he extends reads as follows: “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.” He describes these as “great pillars of human happiness.” Many may argue, Washington appears to foresee, that morality can be upheld without religion, but he replies, “reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.” According to Washington, religion and morality contribute to both happiness and the prosperity of a nation.**\***

**Paragraph 2**

A valiant disciple is, I surmise, likely to have many instances in their life in which they have been required to draw upon their religious foundation in confronting a moral problem. At this point in my life, I was preparing for missionary service, and I was looking for a new job. I received quite precisely the fulfillment of the prophecy extended regarding those who pay their tithing: “I will … open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall* not *be room* enough *to receive it*” (Malachi 3:10). I was shortly after met with more than one job offer, that I did not have to long look for. In fact, I merely brought up my interest in a job at another establishment that I was interested in, and they had described that they had actually thought of me specifically as an example of employees they should look for! I worked at an establishment nearby that I suppose this manager had frequented, and I was therefore already known by this employer. In fact, the case was true with the hiring manager at Starbucks as well. I was reached out to directly by them because of my performance at my previous job. So, I accepted this Starbucks job because of the increased pay. At this job, I was told I would be required to test the coffee. I declined due to my religious views. This was, thankfully, not a tremendous test of faith. And I was likewise humbled to have the opportunity to describe to others my religion, as why I did not drink coffee soon became a source of curiosity. I am confident that I was not only blessed temporally and generally by the Lord for that action, but He also specifically blessed me after that manner: I was enabled, privileged, and blessed to be the instrument in His hands providing information about His Restored Church to inquisitive souls, likely because of that action. How grateful I was for this, and surely other, blessings that followed my obedience.

**Paragraph 3**

I reaffirm that religion is a prerequisite for effectual and sustained and real moral behavior. As the Lord said, “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). This is true and important and a doctrine I believe vital to communicate, especially when the notion that morality can be sustained indefinitely without religion is asserted. I anticipate living in a world where these values are increasingly assailed to be possible and hopeful. I previously believed that the world would only increase in darkness: but then I recalled Sister Amy A. Wright’s words in a BYUI devotional given in October of 2022. She said: “If we want to know what the world is going to be like right before the Savior comes again, we simply need to read about what the world was like right before He came and visited the people in ancient America.” Throughout Helaman and 3 Nephi, we see substantial swings from righteous to unrighteous. In 3 Nephi 1, the sign of Christ’s birth is given shortly after the wicked plan to slay the righteous. There is a tremendous turn to righteousness following. In 3 Nephi 2, they began to disbelieve signs and wonders, and wickedness increases. Following is a great conflict between gathered together Nephites and Lamanites and Gadianton Robbers. Then a subsequent repentance and conversion to righteousness. Then the building up of classes, and eventually the destruction of the government. I believe we may be able to expect big paradigm shifts as to changes in righteousness due to the trends we can observe in 3 Nephi, and Sister Wright’s observation. Likewise, Elder Holland provides tremendous, prophetic counsel addressing this subject specifically, and also giving promises of a possibility to “turn back the tide of fear and pessimism and anxiety surrounding us.” He goes on, “If as individual disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we were all more loving and peaceful and kind, if we would all try to keep the commandments of God as best we can, then we have every reason to feel confident about the world’s condition and our own. Walking into the future this way, filled with peace and godly promise, we could have an absolutely stunning impact on the world” (“A Future Filled with Hope”, Jeffrey R. Holland, 2023). I believe that if we follow his counsel of striving to be more loving, peaceful, and kind, while keeping the Lord’s commandments, the word may improve in quality, and “the values of our lives” may prevail with others, as he admonishes us to request of the Lord.

**\***To support these claims with the words of a living prophet, I would cite Elder Christofferson’s words:

“Self-discipline has eroded and societies are left to try to maintain order and civility by compulsion. The lack of internal control by individuals breeds external control by governments. One columnist observed that ‘gentlemanly behavior [for example, once] protected women from coarse behavior. Today, we expect sexual harassment laws to restrain coarse behavior. …’

There could never be enough rules so finely crafted as to anticipate and cover every situation, and even if there were, enforcement would be impossibly expensive and burdensome. This approach leads to diminished freedom for everyone. In the memorable phrase of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, ‘We would not accept the yoke of Christ; so now we must tremble at the yoke of Caesar.’

In the end, it is only an internal moral compass in each individual that can effectively deal with the root causes as well as the symptoms of societal decay. Societies will struggle in vain to establish the common good until sin is denounced as sin and moral discipline takes its place in the pantheon of civic virtues.”