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Of the First Council of Seventy

Two great truths must be accepted by mankind if they shall save themselves: first, that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Only Begotten, the very Son of God, whose atoning blood and resurrection save us from the physical and spiritual death brought to us by the Fall; and next, that God has restored to the earth, in these last days, through the Prophet Joseph, his Holy Priesthood with the fulness of the everlasting gospel, for the salvation of all men on the earth. Without these truths man may not hope for the riches of the life hereafter. (See *THE IMPROVEMENT ERA*, vol. 38, pp. 204-205.)

Those words were given by the First Presidency of the Church in a testimony to the world on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in this dispensation, and if the Spirit will give me utterance, I would like to say a few things with reference to them.

SALVATION CENTERED IN CHRIST

We are the people of God. We are the members of the kingdom of God on earth, which is this Church, and we have the knowledge and light and revelation which causes us to know that salvation is centered in Christ. We believe in Christ. We are the Church of Christ. We believe that through his atoning blood and the sacrifice which he worked out, all men will be raised in immortality, that is to say, the body and the spirit will be reunited, a resurrection will be brought to pass; and we believe that those who obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel will gain, in addition to immortality, the glorious gift of eternal life.

We have the witness and knowledge that Christ was the First-born of the Father, that in the spirit world, in the pre-existent eternities, he obeyed the laws of the Father and by diligence and righteousness ascended even there to the status of a God.

We recognize him as the Creator, under the Father, of the world and all that in it is. We worship him as the God who revealed his saving truths to all the ancient prophets, those mighty leaders who have come in every age when he has had a people on the earth.

We believe that he came into the world, born of Mary, literally and actually, as we are born of our mothers; that he came into the world, born of God the Eternal Father, the Almighty Elohim, literally and actually, as we are born of our earthly fathers.

We believe that he had the power to lay down his life, and the power to take it up again, because Mary was his mother and God was his father.

We certify of Christ; we preach of Christ; and we have the knowledge that salvation is in and through him and him alone. "Salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (see Mosiah 3:18), and

"how great the importance," as Lehi expressed it, "to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth." (See II Nephi 2:8.)

ACCEPTANCE OF PROPHETS

Now it is not possible, in my judgment, for people in the world to accept Christ and come to salvation, unless at one and the same time they accept the prophets whom Christ has sent and receive the administration of holy ordinances under their hands.

Christ and his prophets are one. We could not believe in Christ if there were not prophets to declare Christ and his saving truths unto us. The Apostle Paul reasoned on this subject, and he said:

. . . how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?
and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? (Romans 10:14-15.)

Except for Christ, there would be no salvation. Except for the prophets of God, sent in the various ages of the earth's history, the testimony of Christ would not be borne, the message of salvation would not be taught, and there would be no legal administrators who could perform the ordinances of salvation for men, that is, perform them so they will be binding on earth and sealed eternally in the heavens.

So it is that the Lord has sent prophets. No one would suppose that he could believe in Christ and reject Peter, James, and John. The Lord and his prophets go hand in hand. Christ said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman"; then he said to his Apostles, "Ye are the branches." (John 15:1, 5.) The branches and the vine are connected. He taught also that if the branches were torn away from him, they would wither and die and be cast into the fire. If people in the world would pick the fruit of eternal life off the branches, they have to accept the prophets, for the branches are the prophets.

GOSPEL DISPENSATIONS

This has been the system that the Lord has had from the days of Father Adam to the present moment, and it will continue eternally. The Lord sent Adam in the beginning to teach the principles of salvation. Adam had a dispensation of the gospel, that is, the Lord revealed direct from heaven to Adam, dispensed to him, the saving truths; and anybody that lived in the days of Adam, to be saved in the celestial kingdom, had to accept Jesus Christ in whom salvation lay, and also had to accept Adam as the revealer, the prophet, the legal administrator who taught the laws of salvation and administered the ordinances thereof. It went in just that manner in every succeeding dispensation.

In the days of Enoch, if a man would be saved in the celestial

kingdom, he accepted Christ as the Savior of the world and Enoch as his prophet. And so in the days of Abraham, of Moses, of Peter, James, and John, and of this day.

I suppose that the Church procedure was not too different in former days. They had testimony meetings then, and when people stood up in them, as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, they bore witness that Jesus Christ was the Son of God who would come, and that Adam was his prophet, or Enoch, or the head of whatever dispensation was involved; and that is the way it is today. We certify of Jesus Christ, and we certify of Joseph Smith, and they are one. They are united perfectly.

For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;
 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;
 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom;
 therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. (D. & C. 84:36-38.)

VISION OF ABRAHAM

Now may I mention the great vision that the Patriarch Abraham had? You recall that the Lord showed him the pre-existent hosts and, more particularly, the noble and great in that world. Abraham saw them, the intelligences, the spirit sons of God our Father, the noble and great spirit who were among them, and the Lord said to him, ". . . Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born." (See Abraham 3:23.)

As with Abraham, so with all the prophets of God. Sometimes someone may wonder, that is, someone in the world, how is it that the Father and the Son would appear to a fourteen-and-a-half-year-old boy in the spring of 1820, to usher in, as we express it, the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.

Joseph Smith sat with Father Abraham in the councils of eternity, and Joseph Smith was ordained as Abraham was ordained to come down and be the head of a gospel dispensation here. He had ascended by virtue of obedience, intelligence, progression, and righteousness to a high state of spiritual perfection in that world. When he came here, he brought with him the talents and abilities, the deep spirituality, and the innate righteousness that he developed back there under the tutelage of God the Father.

In the eternal worlds, the Firstborn spirit offspring of the Father was Jehovah who is Jesus Christ. He was pre-eminent. Standing next to Christ was the great spirit, Michael. Christ was ordained as a lamb slain from the foundation of the world, chosen to come here and be the Redeemer. Michael was prepared and chosen and sent here as Father Adam, the first man of all men, the first flesh upon the earth, the head of the human race, and the presiding high priest, under Christ, over all the earth.

PLACE OF JOSEPH SMITH

The spirit men who were associated with Christ and with Adam in the pre-existent eternities, and who were more valiant than all their fellows, were the ones chosen to head the various dispensations of the gospel. One of these was the Prophet Joseph Smith. It doesn't take much reflection then, it seems to me, for us to know that Joseph Smith was one of the dozen greatest spirits that God the Eternal Father had in all the councils of eternity; that he came so as to be here at the appointed time and at the express hour and at the very moment that the Lord designed to open this dispensation. He was here to take his part in that event.

I do not think that the Father and the Son would have appeared to an ordinary fourteen-and-a-half-year-old boy, if he had gone out into that grove of trees to ask the Lord which of all the churches was right. I think the Lord had been preparing Joseph Smith for that event from all eternity; that Joseph Smith had the spiritual stature, the strength for righteousness that enabled him to endure the vision; that he had the talent and ability to press forward in righteousness in the kingdom of God on earth: first, to establish it; and then, somewhat, to perfect its organization before he was taken home, before he sealed his testimony with his blood.

In my judgment Christ and his prophets are one; and salvation in this day is, first, through Christ and his atoning sacrifice, and it is, second, through accepting the atoning sacrifice and the doctrines of Christ as they have been revealed by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and as they are taught by the living oracles who wear the mantle of the Prophet and stand at this moment at the head of the kingdom of God on earth.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

May I just tell you one experience that I had. I have never told this to any person before, except my wife. Six months ago in the Solemn Assembly, when the First Presidency of the Church were sustained, as I sat down here behind one of these lower pulpits, the voice of the Lord came into my mind as certainly, I am sure, as the voice of the Lord came into the mind of Enos, and the very words were formed, and it said:

"These are they whom I have chosen as the First Presidency of my Church. Follow them"—those few words.

I have had a testimony of the divinity of this work from my youth. I was reared in a family where love was the motive force, where my parents taught me righteousness, and I have grown up with a testimony. But that witness was an added assurance. It meant to me, if I hadn't known before, which I did know before, that this is the Lord's Church; that his hand is over it; that he organized it; that these men who preside are called of him; that

they are his anointed; that if we will follow them as they follow Christ, we will have eternal life, which is my prayer for myself and for all Israel. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Tabernacle Choir and the congregation joined in singing the hymn, "I Need Thee Every Hour."

ELDER CLIFFORD E. YOUNG

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

It has been a refining influence to attend this great conference. I cannot recall when I have felt more at peace than I have during these sessions. It seems to me that from the very beginning with President McKay's opening address, followed by others of the brethren including Brother Thomas E. McKay who spoke so beautifully and tenderly, everything done and said has contributed to a peace that I am sure we all feel, and we all felt as we sang that beautiful hymn, ["I Need Thee Every Hour."]

MARION G. ROMNEY

I was very grateful in the selection of Brother Marion G. Romney to the Quorum of the Twelve. I have been intimately associated with him for the past ten years—I had not known him prior to our being called to be Assistants—but I have learned to love him and to appreciate him for his sterling worth, for his integrity; and I say to you, my brethren and sisters, without any fear of contradiction, that I know of no man who has ever been chosen to fill this high and sacred trust who is better prepared and more worthy than is Marion G. Romney. I hope he will not feel embarrassed because of my saying this, but I say it from the depths of my heart.

I love these men. I have learned to love the Authorities as I have never loved them before. I was reared in a home where the Authorities of the Church were always held up to us as servants of the Almighty, men who were trying to their utmost to establish the Church and kingdom of God in the earth, men who were unselfish in their service. In our home it was regarded almost as a sin for anyone to say anything unkind of those whom God had chosen to direct the affairs of the Church.

I have been grateful for that heritage. I have tried to implant that in the hearts of my children. My wife was reared in the same atmosphere, and she too reflected in her life that absolute confidence and deep appreciation of those whom the Lord had chosen.

LESSONS FROM MISSIONARIES

I have recently had the experience of visiting two of our mis-