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Of the First Council of the Seventy

A FEW WEEKS ago, there came to Salt Lake City, thirteen students from different parts of western Germany. They had been sent to the United States by their government, and while in this country, they became the guests of the different cities they visited, and the railroads gave them free transportation. They were impressed with Salt Lake City, and their few hours here visiting the centers of interest and meeting some of the people was to them a memorable thing. One of the young ladies remarked that they did not like the large cities for the people seemed to have little interest in them. They had words of gratitude for the manner in which they were received and the spirit of brotherhood that they experienced here in Salt Lake City. One of them said: "Tell us about the United States and particularly of your city here in the mountains." They were promised a letter to be sent to them in Germany, and I am taking this opportunity of reading it to you.

Our government of the United States is, as you know, one of the youngest nations of the world's history. The government was organized in 1789, under the supervision of the first president, George Washington. There were thirteen divisions called states, which had been settled by people from England, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the Scandinavian countries. The dominant people were English. Most of them had a profound belief in religion and morality, which ideals were expressed in their civic documents like the Constitution of the United States. It was a period of great and wise men, and among them were families from your native land. The noted German soldier, Baron Von Steuben, was an officer in Washington's army, and the name of Hyam Solomon will ever be remembered for his giving his entire fortune to the American cause at the

time of the terrible suffering at Valley Forge. Your own forefathers had not recovered from the terrible times of the Thirty Years' War when they turned to America. In Germany there were intense poverty, suffering, and religious persecutions in the eighteenth century. America had been settled along the Atlantic coast, when and from the mass of human misery came your forefathers who settled largely in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. They brought with them a love for the arts and music and adapted themselves to the new world.

Children of your fathers entered our schools and universities and came to understand our American civic and political life. In this country, you have preserved your arts and music and literature and great schools of philosophy. Your Immanuel Kant was known by our earliest educators. The Germans have come to know the fundamentals of the Constitution of the United States. If you were attending our schools, you would learn that the opening statement of the Mayflower Compact is: "In the name of God, Amen." And a little later you find the words: "... for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith." Americans have always promoted the ideals of the Christian faith. Among our noted documents of history are the Articles of Confederation, which begin with these lines:

Whereas we all came to these parts of America with one and the same end, namely, to advance the kingdom of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberty of the gospel in its purity.

Then I have pride in calling your attention to the first meeting held in Virginia known as the General Assembly of Virginia. To this meeting came many of your German people, possibly there were some of your own forebears. In the account of the first meeting of the Virginians, we have these lines:

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... for as much as men's affairs do little prosper where God's service is neglected, all the burgesses took their places in the choir till a prayer was said by the Reverend Mr. Buche, a German minister, "that it would please God to guide and to sanctify all our proceedings to his own glory."

Finally, read the Declaration of Independence, which acknowledges the Creator as the source of life and liberty, relies upon "the protection of Divine Providence," and is written in a spirit of reverence, with an appeal to the right as established by God. You see our fathers always in this civic and political life, acknowledged the leadership of God and sought humbly to follow him. Take your Bible and read the 127th Psalm:

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

Here in America, men were free to believe as they wished. The history of the United States has largely been a history of religious beliefs. In fact, the American people are naturally believers in God, the eternal Father, and in his Son Jesus, the Christ.

After the lapse of the ages when a new world of discovery and invention had changed man's social outlook, and the way of living had been recreated in the world, it was natural that someone should come forth to look to God for a revelation of his holy word. Many stouthearted followers of the Holy Bible looked toward the new day. In 1620, Pastor John Robinson, in bidding the Pilgrim Fathers good-bye as they left the shores of Holland for far-off America, said to his congregation of faithful men and women:

If God reveal anything to you, by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive truth by my ministry; for I am fully persuaded, I am very confident, that the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of His holy word. . . . I beseech you to remember

it is an article in your Church Covenant that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God.

During the French Revolution, Michelet wrote in his history of France:

The world is waiting for a Faith to march forward again, to breathe and to live. But never can a faith have a beginning in deceit, cunning, or treatise of falsehood.

Soon after these words were written, there was born on the frontier of the United States "a new Faith to march forward again, to breathe and to live." A young boy walked into the woods one day—a boy not hungering for food, but for God, and like the shepherds of old, he felt he must go ". . . even unto Bethlehem." (Luke 2:15.)

The youthful prophet was Joseph Smith, who knew that what the world needed first, and to the end, was God. Not God in the heavens alone and in the past, but God here, and ready by the man "whom he hath ordained" to repeat and enlarge the work given to the world eighteen hundred years before. Joseph Smith had that divine discontent, which gave him the certainty that whoever opens his heart to the Savior of mankind receives life, and light, and strength.

From the day that the Prophet announced his divine calling until his death, he wrote and spoke the revelations of God and became the clarion of a new day. He awakened a new eagerness in the hearts of men. He met the problems of the ethical and religious conditions of mankind and gave anew the way from the material world to the kingdom of God. The finer elements of life were restored to primacy. Human conduct was won to better issues, which are the cultivation of righteousness in the entire life and activity of mankind.

The coming of John the Baptist, and later of Peter, James, and John, resulted in the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for these holy men had restored

the priesthood of God, and the divine work of these latter days was begun for the redemption and salvation of mankind. The plight of the world at that time was its lack of vision, its loss of the principles of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. With the restoration of the gospel came a spiritual conviction, a dynamic knowledge, which has been woven into the very lives of the Latter-day Saints. Man's relationship to his heavenly Father has become known. There is a new vision of the kingdom of God, the purpose of which is to culminate in the reign of righteousness upon the earth. This is the prevalent note in the restored gospel. God reigns in heaven and in earth. He is the divine King of nations.

Out of our faith, we find everything that is holy and pure and of good report. The morning of the first Sabbath day after the arrival of the Pioneers in this valley, Saturday, July 24, 1847, divine services were held, and the people were seated in a circle out in the sagebrush, and nearby were the waters of a lovely stream. Gratitude to God was expressed in song and prayer, and the words of Isaiah were read by Apostle Orson Pratt, who gave the sermon:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. (Isaiah 52:7-8.)

The Latter-day Saints believe and know honestly that Adam came to earth sent of God, from heaven. He held the priesthood of God and became the first teacher of the gospel to his descendants. The divine ideals as taught by the Father of us all were held sacred, and from that time to the days of the Messiah upon the earth, the truths of God were planted in the hearts of his children. Maurice Maeterlinck, in his book, *The*

Great Secret, says that what we read in the oldest archives of wisdom gives only a faint idea of the sublime doctrines of the ancient teachers. The older the texts, the more pure, the more awe-inspiring are the doctrines they reveal. They may be merely an echo of sublimer doctrines. We come down to the age of the prophets. Says a noted historian:

How fitting it is that Malachi should seal up the book of the Old Testament prophecy by such a clear statement of the coming of the Lord, the Messenger of the Covenant, the Son of righteousness, and thus give the last prediction of him, with whom the evangelists begin their gospel history.

Hugo Munsterberg of Harvard University, a noted German, wrote, in his *Psychology and Life*, something of the past glory of the sacred words:

There is a truth, a beauty, a morality, which is independent of psychological conditions. Every straightforward man, to whom the duties of his real life are no sounding brass, speaks with a sound voice to the psychologist: "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

By the power of the Holy Priesthood which Joseph Smith received from heaven, he established our true relationship to God. Out of this grows the salvation of man—his true immortal life. The nations all bear witness to the need of a light that is not of man. We can give our word to the world that the forces which are to make the world what it ought to be are now within it. We are to study more deeply and constantly the divine truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must know the history of the Church of which we are members. We must understand the meaning of the priesthood of God, which has been given to us. We must know the divine teachings of the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. How beautifully do they teach the words of Shakespeare:

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What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act II, Sc. 2.)

What a directive purpose the Prophet Joseph Smith gives us in the words as found in the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

... seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.

Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God. (Verses 118-119.)

From the beginning of the history of the Church, Joseph Smith organized schools of learning. He became a student and a member of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew classes established in the Kirtland Temple. He established the University of the City of Nauvoo, encouraged the building of the Seventies' Hall of Science. From these institutions came the wonderful schools of learning in Utah.

In 1851, the first extensive library was brought by ox teams to this state. It had been purchased in New York City by Dr. John M. Bernhisel and was a wonderful collection of books. There were the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, Homer, Juvenal, Lucretius, Virgil, Euripides, Sophocles, Plato, Montaigne, Tacitus, Spenser, Herodotus, Goldsmith, and many others of the great masters of the world's best literature. The library received copies of the *New York Herald*, *New York Evening Post*, the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, and the *North American Review*. Of the scientific works there were Newton's *Principia*, Herschel's *Outlines of Astronomy*, and Von Humboldt's *Cosmos*. The treatises on philosophy included the works of John Stuart Mill, Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Emanuel Swedenborg.

The pioneers were always striving to understand the arts and sciences, for they sensed keenly the power of all truth. They knew the human constants—hunger and labor, seedtime and harvest, love and faith—which entered into their lives from the very first. They built the Tabernacle which you visited. They continued establishing schools and colleges and established a theater in the wilderness which in time became recognized by the artists of the London stage as well as the famous dramatists of America. Mr. M. B. Leavitt has written in his *Fifty Years of the American Stage*:

Sweeping as the statement may seem, I do not believe that the theater has ever rested on a higher plane, both as to its purpose and its offerings, than at Salt Lake City, the Capital of Mormondom.

Utah today has become a great state. Ellsworth Huntington of Yale University, has recently written in his book, entitled, *Civilization and Climate*:

The proud position of Utah is presumably the result of Mormonism. The leaders of that faith have had the wisdom to insist on a thorough system of schools, and have obliged the children to attend them. The "Gentiles" have in self-defence, been forced to do equally well, and the result has been admirable. Whatever one may think of Mormonism as a religious belief, it must be credited with having accomplished a remarkable work in spreading a moderate degree of education almost universally among the people of Utah.

Count Hermann Keyserling, the noted German philosopher and historian, came to Salt Lake City a few years ago and afterwards wrote in his *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, these words:

The Mormons have achieved a civilization hardly attained by any other people. In barely half a century they have changed a salt-desert into a garden. They are, moreover, admirable citizens, law abiding, honest, and progressive.

All the religious denominations of the world have been welcomed to Utah. One of our Articles of Faith says:

We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

Wherever the Mormons have settled, this has been the attitude of the Church toward all denominations and peoples. In an ordinance relating to religious societies passed by the city council of Nauvoo, we have these words:

AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Nauvoo, that the Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Latter-day Saints, Quakers, Episcopalians, Universalists, Unitarians, Mohammedans, and all other religious sects and denominations whatever, shall have free toleration and equal privileges in this city; and should any person be guilty of ridiculing or abusing or otherwise depreciating another in consequence of his religion, or of disturbing or interrupting any religious meeting within the limits of this city, he shall on conviction thereof before the Mayor or Municipal Court be fined or imprisoned at the discretion of the Mayor or Court.

You are now to be conducted to our central place of worship, the Tabernacle. Elder Zimmerman, my brother in the priesthood of God, will conduct you there and will tell you much about the building. Professor T. E. Tallmadge, Fellow American Institute of Architects, says in his *Story of Architecture in America*:

Up and down the Atlantic Seaboard, through the Western reserve, along the Gulf of Mexico, up the Mississippi, and over the plains, the Greek Revival spread. I have noticed that the famous Tabernacle built in Salt Lake City by that extraordinary man, Brigham Young, has the tell-tale Greek profiles in its mouldings and cornices.

In some of our early-day buildings we find no lack of knowledge and appreciation of the fine arts. You may recall how you Germans had been in-

fluenced by the Greeks in your fine architecture. I recall a number of great buildings notable in architectural history where the Greek influence is plainly seen. I may mention the old Museum and the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, and in Vienna, the Parliament House. As you listen to the music of the great organ which was built by a noted organist in Pioneer days, it gives me pride to tell you that the Tabernacle is now known as one of the greatest symphony halls in the world. As early as 1875, our people heard the music of Beethoven and Bach, and picking up a program of Easter Choral Services in 1949, we find that *Jesu, Priceless Treasure* of Johann Sebastian Bach, together with the *Requiem* of Johannes Brahms, constituted the program. The great Brahms *Requiem* is not a mass for the dead but rather an ode to the departed.

This is just to tell you that the Latter-day Saints have been lovers of the classical music as well as of all the arts and literature since the Church was organized. Many a time, the people have in worship sung with the choir: "How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place, O Lord of Hosts."

May I say in conclusion, my fellow students, that the Mormon people have expressed their love of God by their constant faith and prayer which have resulted in great love for all peoples wherever they live on the earth.

I pray that you students may have a prosperous and happy journey throughout America and that you may return to your homes in peace and safety. May God ever bless you.

President David O. McKay:

President Levi Edgar Young of the First Council of Seventy has just addressed us.

Our concluding speaker will be Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve.