

# America 1776–1976

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Education Week was first instituted at BYU during the administration of Franklin S. Harris in 1922, some 55 years ago. Its inauguration and administration was first entrusted to Lowry Nelson, whose administrative ability made it a success from the beginning. Today there are 86 Education Weeks held throughout the country, having 83,173 enrollments. In addition, there are 28 Education Days held in other communities, having 8,304 enrollments. If to that be added our Home Study programs; our educational centers at Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, Ogden, Idaho Falls, and Rexburg and our foreign programs at Salzburg, Austria; Paris, France; Madrid, Spain; Jerusalem; and Mexico City, all of which are conducted under the leadership of Dean Stanley A. Peterson and are together classified as Continuing Education, BYU is now serving 300,000 students. This is in addition to its Provo student body of 25,000 full-time students, who alone constitute the largest body on a single campus of any private school in the country. For 21 years we have been the largest Church-related university in the country, and for 11 years the largest private institution of higher learning of any kind.

In an address given by Hon. Charles Malik in 1970, a distinguished educator and statesman

in strife-torn Lebanon and former President of the United Nations General Assembly, he expressed the hope that some day

*A great university will arise somewhere—I hope in America—to which Christ will return in His full glory and power, a university which will, in the promotion of scientific, intellectual and artistic excellence, surpass by far even the best secular universities of the present, but which will at the same time enable Christ to bless it and act and feel perfectly at home in it.<sup>1</sup>*

We believe that university has already arisen, that we are that institution, and we pray that we may have the humility, faith, and Christian performance to justify the hopes of Dr. Malik and our belief. If you want to learn more about this divine institution of learning, which belongs to all members of the Church, you may find out about it in the one-volume history entitled *Brigham Young University—A School of Destiny*, which is being sold, below cost, in

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*Ernest L. Wilkinson was the president of Brigham Young University from 1951 to 1964 and from 1965 to 1971. This address was given at BYU on 17 August 1976 at a Bicentennial Assembly during Campus Education Week.*

the corridors of this building and in the BYU Bookstore. Every family of the Church should have one.

In speaking to you today I pray for an earnest interest in your prayers that there may be a burning in your bosom so that you may recognize that the Holy Ghost is bearing witness that what I say is true. As material for my address I have drawn heavily upon Elder Mark E. Petersen's *The Great Prologue*, and an as yet unpublished book by W. Glenn Harmon, a distinguished alumnus and former president of the Berkeley Stake, entitled *The World Discovers America*. I am grateful to both of them for their major contributions to our living generation. I don't, however, want you to blame them for all that I say for part of it will come from my own research which may not be as authoritative as their manuscripts.

In celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of our country, certain divine facts stand out above all others—that God rules in the affairs of man and nations; that righteousness produces great nations and sin destroys them; that virtue exalteth a nation, while sin is a reproach to any people; that in guiding the destiny of nations the Lord has given to man his free agency—the right to choose between good and evil; that for most of the history of the world, through ignorance or plain wickedness, man chose to follow the downward path so that sin prevailed over righteousness; that when the Savior appeared He was rejected by His own, but gave His life on the cross so that by righteous living we may all be saved; that following His crucifixion and the martyrdom of most of His apostles there occurred, because of corruption and wickedness, centuries of apostasy and hundreds of years of bloody warfare, much of which was in the name of an apostate Christianity; that instead Christianity was taken over by emperors who merged church and state, assumed control of Christianity and corrupted and paginated

it; that later historical events of great historic importance over a number of centuries took place leading to the founding of our country and the reestablishment on this continent of the Kingdom of God (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), which is the most important event that has occurred in the two centuries of our existence as a nation, and indeed since the crucifixion of the Savior. As members of the kingdom and Church, we, therefore, know more about the origin of our country and have more to be thankful for than any other people.

In the short time at my disposal today I propose to relate some of the events which history records took place preparatory to and necessary for the formation of our country and the restoration of the gospel, and whether this nation will continue to survive as a nation or, like 22 other civilizations, will be swept off the land because of the iniquity of its people.

### **Nephi's Visions and Fulfillment**

The great Mormon Prophet Nephi, in a vision, foresaw the restoration of the gospel six hundred years before the Savior's birth. The events leading up to it were shown him in considerable detail.

1. Nephi wrote that he had been shown nations and kingdoms by an angel who described them as "the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 13:3). These have been interpreted for us as being the nations and kingdoms during and after the life of the Savior, other than those of the Jews.

2. Next he was shown the extent to which the Gentiles had fallen away from the truth of the original gospel due to the influence of a "great and abominable church" which had been founded among them. Said Nephi: "And I saw the devil that he was the founder of it" (1 Nephi 13:6). This we consider to be the days of the great apostasy. It was during these dark ages that the Roman emperors first seized control of the church, even dictating points of doctrine, that upon the deterioration

of that empire the church (by 1300) to a very great extent controlled who should govern whom in secular matters by placing its weight behind this or that aspirant for political power. Regional and local kings, princes, and dukes were “consecrated” by the church, and woe to the one who was unable to get such a church blessing! Thus the “divine right” of kings and emperors was fostered, even as at one time it had been fostered in pagan Egypt and Rome. As the various kings and princes grew stronger, and as nationalism asserted itself more and more, there were inevitable conflicts between various rulers.

Further, the reformation which followed did not end the controversy over the various schisms of apostate Christianity. Wars raged throughout Europe, including the Thirty-Year War, which broke out in 1618 and did not end until 1648.

Between 1477 and 1564, Martin Luther in Germany, Zwingli in Switzerland, and John Calvin in France and Switzerland brought about the Reformation on the Continent; in 1533 papal authority in England was ended, and in 1535 the Church of England came into being with Henry VIII as its head. The administration of the English kings was, however, just as dictatorial as had been the emperors of Rome.

3. Nephi next relates that he “looked and beheld many waters; and they divided the Gentiles from the seed of my brethren” (1 Nephi 13:10). This we understand was the Atlantic Ocean which separated Europe and the Gentiles from America, where the seed of Nephi were located.

4. Continuing, Nephi recorded, “I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were

in the promised land” (1 Nephi 13:12). From the record written by Nephi and the interpretation of our Church leaders, we conclude that the “man among the Gentiles” upon whom the Spirit of God came down and wrought was Christopher Columbus.

Jacob Wasserman, the German biographer, makes it quite clear in his biography of Columbus that the discoverer felt himself an inspired man, sent from heaven to undertake the voyage which he called his “enterprise.” Columbus himself wrote of his voyage:

*The Lord was well disposed to my desire, and he bestowed upon me courage and understanding; knowledge of seafaring . . . of geometry and astronomy likewise. . . . I have seen and truly I have studied all books . . . and other arts which our Lord unlocked my mind, sent me upon the sea, and gave me fire for the deed. Those who heard of my enterprise called it foolish, mocked me and laughed. But who can doubt that but the Holy Ghost inspired me?*<sup>2</sup>

Columbus wrote to King Ferdinando of Spain, who had authorized his voyage, “I come to your Majesty as the Emissary of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>3</sup> In his last will and testament Columbus sealed his mission by his testimony:

*In the name of the most holy Trinity who inspired me with the idea and afterwards made it perfectly clear to me that I could navigate and go to the Indies from Spain by traversing the ocean westward.*

5. Although Columbus is no longer regarded as the first explorer to find the Western Hemisphere, there being indications that there were pre-Columbian voyages to America by Arabians, Japanese, Welshmen, Irishmen, and Frenchmen, none of these earlier discoverers led to permanent colonization in America. The reason for this was explained to Lehi by the Lord in these words:

*There shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord. . . . Behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance. [2 Nephi 1:6, 8]*

6. The people who would colonize America were described by Nephi as being “white, and exceedingly fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain” (1 Nephi 13:15). In so describing them, Nephi was undoubtedly referring to his own people before the eventual destruction of the Nephites at the Hill Cumorah 420 years after Christ.

In fulfillment of that part of the vision it is significant to note that early colonizers of North America were the “fairer skinned people,” whom Nephi saw in his vision. The majority of the early colonizers came from England to Virginia in 1607, the Pilgrim fathers in 1620, William Penn to Pennsylvania in 1621, the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, and others all along the coast. From 1628 to 1641 alone more than 20,000 immigrants came from England. Another “exceedingly fair” people were the Dutch, at least 85,000 of whom settled in the New Netherlands.

*From September 30, 1819, when the official count of immigrants to the United States began, until December 31, 1855, a total of 4,212,624 persons of foreign birth arrived in this country. Of that number:*

*1,747,930 were Irish.*

*1,206,087 were German.*

*207,492 were English (Many thousands had come earlier.)*

*188,725 were French.<sup>4</sup>*

7. Nephi further relates that

*“I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before*

*the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them.” [1 Nephi 13:16]*

*There are two important points to be made here: (1) that the colonists did humble themselves before God, and (2) that the power of God was with them.<sup>5</sup>*

Having “gone forth out of captivity” refers to the emergence of the people of that day as free men—they were free from the despotic rule of kings and emperors. Their humility and reliance on God was implicit in their reason for coming to America, of which the best example is the Mayflower fathers.

*All they desired was to worship the Lord according to the dictates of their own consciences, and not be compelled to accept state-dominated churches.<sup>6</sup>*

When they arrived in America under the leadership of William Bradford, they wrote the famous Mayflower Compact, which was a further expression of their humility before God. Unfortunately, however, they originally committed themselves to communal ownership of all property, in which the slothful obtained the same benefits as the diligent. As has always occurred in experiments of this kind from the beginning of the world to now, this did not work. They so lost their initiative that they nearly died of starvation. As Governor Bradford wrote in his diary, they had thought they were “wiser than God,” who gave every man his freedom. And so they turned away from communal ownership and gave each family a parcel of land. And when the harvest was gathered, instead of famine they had plenty.

There were, of course, other types of people who emigrated to America, designated by Elder Petersen as the exploiters.

*They were the conquerors of the Lamanites of Meso-America and South America, those simple people who had been taught to await their promised “White God.” They were also the gold seekers, the*

*plunderers, and the pirates who plagued America in those early times.*

*They were the trappers and fur traders who thrived on the destruction of fur-bearing wild life in the north and who often went out of their way to discourage the establishment of permanent settlements, which would tend to disperse the animals whose skins were like gold to them.*

*And they were likewise the early exploiters of the Grand Banks off Newfoundland where fish ran in fantastic numbers.<sup>7</sup>*

The motivation of these two different types of colonists is illustrated by the story told by Roger Babson, a noted statistician in our century. It was his experience one day to travel practically all day over a great plantation of a noted land baron in South America. As they sat on the portico of his home that evening, the baron asked Roger Babson, "How is it that South America, with all of its great resources, in many respects more abundant than North America, has never been able to make the progress of North America?"

Nonplussed for the moment, Babson hesitated to reply. Finally, the land baron supplied his own answer: "I think it's because North America was discovered and settled by the Pilgrim fathers who came in search of their God, whereas the Spaniards came to South America in search of gold."

### **Religious Bigotry and Separation of Church and State**

On coming to America the colonists did not immediately abandon the idea of separation of church and state. Devout as they were, the Pilgrim fathers were narrow and bigoted with respect to competing religions. For his advocacy of religious freedom, Williams, in 1636, was banished from the Pilgrim colony. Ann Hutchinson likewise was ordered out of the colony for her "advanced" teachings. She laid the foundation of Quakerism. One of her converts, Mary Dyer, carried the torch

of Quakerism back to the colony. She was convicted by the Puritan court for daring to assert her right to worship as she pleased and was hung on June 1, 1660.

Some seventeen years later, William Penn "framed the first charter in America separating church and state, at the Quaker colony of West Jersey in 1677."<sup>8</sup> This was necessary for the restoration of the gospel and occurred 109 years before the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

### **Declaration of Independence and War**

As for the power of God being with the colonies, their deep religious convictions and zealous desire for freedom

*formed the foundation on which they subsequently based their demands for self-determination and independence from the Mother Country. As the scriptures say; ". . . where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17)<sup>9</sup>*

One of the great documents of all history, the Declaration of Independence, begins by reciting the separate and equal status to which the colonies are entitled by "Nature's God" and concludes with a reliance on "Divine Providence." This Declaration of 200 years ago is so fundamental to our bicentennial celebration that I will read important extracts from it.

*The Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress, in Philadelphia, on July 4, 1776, and was signed by John Hancock as president and by Charles Thomson as secretary. It was published first on July 6 in the Pennsylvania Evening Post. A copy of the Declaration, engrossed on parchment, was signed by members of Congress on and after August 2, 1776.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*When, in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political*

*bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. . . .*

*The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. . . .*

*He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. . . .*

*He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people. . . .*

*He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.*

*He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of the salaries.*

*He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.*

*He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies, without the Consent of our legislatures.*

*He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.*

The Declaration then recited that the King had quartered large bodies of armed troops among us; protected them by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these States; cut off their trade with all parts of the world; imposed taxes on them without their consent; deprived them in many cases of the benefits of trial by jury; transported them beyond seas to be tried for pretended offenses; taken away their charters, abolished their most valuable laws, and altered fundamentally the forms of their government; suspended their own legislatures and declared themselves

invested with power to legislate for the people in all cases whatsoever. Continuing, the Declaration stated:

*He has abdicated Government here by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.*

*He has plundered our seas, ravished our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.*

*He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.*

*He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands. . . .*

*In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms. Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. . . .*

*WE, THEREFORE, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, Free and Independent States: that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved: and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.*

### Revolutionary War

Not only did Nephi note that these gentile settlers humbled themselves before God and that divine power accompanied them but he saw that by this divine power they “were delivered . . . out of the hands of all other nations” (see 1 Nephi 13:17–19).

He thus foresaw the winning of the Revolutionary War.

Only revelation could be credited for such foresight. The colonists themselves were no military match for Great Britain, which had the greatest war machine of the time. They had three million people against Britain’s eleven million. They were scattered along the seacoast, their towns were small, and they had no standing army or navy.

A large number were loyal to the crown; others feared they would be defeated and have to endure reprisals and so refused to help the patriots. In the words of John Adams, “A third took up arms, a third is either openly or secretly loyal to the British, and a third just don’t give a \_\_\_\_\_.”

A year before the conflict broke out, Britain had a standing army of 55,000. At the height of the war this increased to 100,000, plus 20,000 German mercenaries.

*The British and the Germans were professional soldiers, whereas the Americans were raw militiamen when Washington took over, a miscellany of trappers, farmers, and tradesmen.*

*Britain was the undoubted mistress of the seas. . . . The colonies had no navy at all, for they had depended upon the British fleet to protect them, inasmuch as they were British subjects.*

*Neither did the colonists have any arms or munitions factories. All their guns and powder had come from England, but now they had to import such things from other countries.<sup>10</sup>*

In this situation and without the help of Divine Providence, it seemed inevitable that they might have to surrender.

*Writing to Congress from Valley Forge in December 1777, Washington declared that unless Congress acted at once to supply both men and provisions, his army must inevitably starve, dissolve, or disperse.*

*On December 17 of that year he described the pitiful condition of his men, but said that he himself would share in every hardship and seek no advantage for himself; he would join with his men in partaking “of every inconvenience.”*

*Two days before Christmas he wrote from Valley Forge that there were 2,898 men “now in Camp unfit for duty, because they are barefoot and otherwise naked.” And this was in the dead of winter.<sup>11</sup>*

They did, however, look to heaven for assistance and

*they were not disappointed. [For] had not Nephi said: “I beheld that the power of God was with them, and that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle”? And had not he also said that he beheld that the colonists were delivered from their enemies by the power of God?*

*The Lord now moved quickly into the conflict. And with . . . supreme effectiveness!<sup>12</sup>*

*. . . France, seeing an opportunity to even up old accounts with her traditional enemy, came in on the side of the Americans. Her navy and several armies of foot soldiers were quickly pledged by a treaty of alliance on February 5, 1778.<sup>13</sup>*

*. . . After the treaty of alliance, Washington wrote to his troops a reminder of the part heaven was playing in this war:*

*It having pleased the Almighty Ruler of the Universe propitiously to defend the cause of the United American States . . . by raising up a powerful Friend among the Princes of the Earth to establish our liberty and Independence upon lasting foundations, it becomes us to set apart a day for gratefully acknowledging the divine Goodness, and*

*celebrating the important Event which we owe to his benign interposition.*<sup>14</sup>

DeRochambeau came to Washington and wrote the American general:

*Sir,*

*Being ordered by the King, my master, to come and [place] myself under your command, I arrive with the deepest feelings of submission, of zeal, and of veneration for your person, and for the distinguished talents which you display in supporting an ever memorable war.*

*We are now, Sir, under your command.*

*The King charged me personally to assure your Excellency, that he would give all possible assistance to his allies, and that this advanced guard [the first French contingent of 3,000 foot soldiers to arrive] would be supported by his whole power; and the strongest proof, which I can give you of it, is, that the whole detachment was ready to embark at Brest on the first of April, if there had been a sufficient number of transports.*

*It is hardly necessary for me to tell your Excellency, that I bring sufficient funds to pay in cash for whatever is needed by the King's army, and that we shall maintain as strict discipline as if we were under the walls of Paris.*<sup>15</sup>

The first fleet of 3,000 were followed

*shortly afterward by another 5,000 men. Lafayette, the brilliant young French general and later a close friend of General Washington, became a most valuable aide to the Americans. This was evident later at the battle of Yorktown, when on October 19, 1781, a force of 16,000 French and American troops under Washington and Lafayette conquered Cornwallis with his 7,000, just two days before a British fleet was to come to his rescue. French warships had blocked Cornwallis so that he could not escape by sea. They previously had driven all British ships out of the entire Chesapeake Bay area.*

*When the war was half over, Spain and Holland came in, determined to punish their longtime enemy*

*Great Britain. The war became virtually a world conflict at this point. The Dutch navy attacked British shipping in the North Sea, while French and Spanish warships attacked the British in the Mediterranean and even in the far-off waters of South Africa and India.*<sup>16</sup>

*. . . The French and Spanish navies combined gave the Americans support of 120 first-class fighting ships, sufficient to challenge the vaunted British mastery of the seas.*<sup>17</sup>

After years of warfare the British surrendered. Realizing that this was only through the interposition of heaven, the commander-in-chief said in his farewell orders to the army, dated at Rocky Hill, near Princeton,

*November 2, 1783:*

*A contemplation of the complete attainment, at a period earlier than could be expected, of the objects for which we contended against so formidable a power, cannot but inspire us with astonishment and gratitude. The disadvantageous circumstances on our part under which the war was undertaken can never be forgotten. The singular interposition of Providence in our feeble condition were such as could scarcely escape the attention of the most unobserving; while the unparalleled perseverance of the armies of the United States through almost every possible suffering and discouragement for the space of eight years was little short of a standing miracle. [Emphasis added]*<sup>18</sup>

*. . . On the eighth anniversary of Paul Revere's ride, April 18, 1783, Washington proclaimed hostilities at an end and sent his men home to their families and farms "without a farthing in their pockets," but with faith that their new government eventually would pay them for their military service. The final articles of peace were signed September 3, 1783, and on the following November 23, the last of the British soldiers sailed out of New York harbor.*<sup>19</sup>

In resigning he advised Congress that his "arduous task" was superseded by a



confidence in the rectitude of our cause and “by the support of the Supreme Power of the Union and the patronage of Heaven.”<sup>20</sup>

In his first inaugural address he said:

*No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency. [Emphasis added]*<sup>21</sup>

### **No Kings among American Gentiles**

One of the important statements of Nephi in interpreting his vision was that “this shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.” (2 Nephi 10:10)

“There were kings among both the Nephites and the Lamanites”<sup>22</sup> but the vision stated there should be no kings among the Gentiles. This prophetic utterance has been fulfilled, despite man-made efforts to the contrary. Napoleon attempted to establish a monarchy in Mexico but failed. There was even an attempt at the end of the Revolutionary War, by certain army officers, to establish a monarchy in the United States, with George Washington as the king. Colonel Lewis Nicola was selected by them to present the proposal to the commander-in-chief. Nicola’s proposal was revolting to him. He was deeply incensed that his officers would make such a proposal. In sharp words, he replied to Colonel Nicola:

Sir,

*With a mixture of great surprise and astonishment, I have read with attention the sentiments you have submitted to my perusal. Be assured, Sir, no occurrence in the course of the war has given me more painful sensations than your information of there being such ideas existing in the*

*army as you have expressed, and I must view them with abhorrence and reprehend with severity. For the present the communication of them will rest on my own bosom, unless some further agitation of the matter shall make a disclosure necessary.*

*I am much at a loss to conceive what part of my conduct could have given encouragement to an address, which to me seems big with the greatest mischiefs that can befall my Country. If I am not deceived in the knowledge of myself, you could not have found a person to whom your schemes are more disagreeable. Let me conjure you, then, if you have any regard for your Country, concern for yourself or posterity, or respect for me, to banish these thoughts from your mind and never communicate, as from yourself or any one else, a sentiment of the like nature.*

*I am, sir, George Washington.*<sup>23</sup>

Washington then went on to establish the precedent that no President should serve more than two terms, refusing the suggestion of Jefferson that he run for a third term. This circumspect precedent was followed by all until Franklin D. Roosevelt, who, contrary to the advice of Washington and with overweening ambition, was in his fourth term at the time of his death. Realizing that this departure from the advice given and precedent set by Washington was a serious mistake, we enacted, with the support of most members of Roosevelt’s own party, a Constitutional amendment limiting the tenure of any president to two terms (22nd Amendment).

### **Blessed with Prosperity**

One of the promises made to the colonists, as revealed in Nephi’s vision, was prosperity. Said he: “And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld they did prosper in the land (1 Nephi 13:20).” This prophecy has been amazingly filled. While the United States has only six percent of the world’s population, the gross national product of the United States is about 40 percent of the entire world. It exceeds that

of all the western European nations combined, and is three times greater than that of the Far East. The wage levels, educational levels, and general standards of living are far above anywhere else in the world. In 1972 the U.S. Census Bureau defined poverty as having an income of less than \$4,275 for a family of four. In most countries of the world, such an income would seem fabulous to the common man—not to mention the starving thousands in some underprivileged lands who have little or no income. The average family income in 1974 exceeded \$10,000.

No matter how America is hated abroad, the fact is that this nation has been the most generous of all in fighting starvation and economic collapse in poor nations and in shipping immediate emergency relief to areas struck by earthquakes, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. Shortly after Christmas of 1974, Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz said that of all the free foods sent by world powers to the starving nations in recent years, 84 percent of it came from the United States.<sup>24</sup>

### **Groundwork for Forming a Union—The United States of America**

Elder Petersen tells us that “giving America its independence from foreign powers is one thing, but setting it up as a free nation” was fraught with many difficulties. “Chaos would have followed the end of the Revolutionary War had not divine influence again been over this land.” But again, the words of the Savior foretold these difficulties were to be overcome. In 3 Nephi 21:4, the Savior stated, “It is wisdom in the Father that they [the Gentiles] should be established in this land and set up as a free people by the power of the Father.”

The leading men of the times felt that the colonies must be united—that there must be a central government. As Franklin had said at the beginning of the War, they must hang together or most certainly they would all hang separately. Indeed, twenty years before

the Revolution, Franklin began to promote the idea of a federal union. The differences between the colonies were so great, however, that few heeded Franklin’s plea. Washington had the same views as Franklin. While these two men were the main architects of national unity, in a large measure, it was Washington who brought it about. He was the only man in whom all thirteen colonies had complete trust. Not long after he relinquished his command in the army in 1783, he sent a dramatic appeal to all governors that the people of the various states should “forget the local prejudices and policies, make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity, and sacrifice some of their individual advantages in the interests of all.”

Still no response came, but when disputes between states arose, Washington was called upon to settle them. His efforts finally seemed to bear fruit, and the Convention of the thirteen colonies was called to meet in Annapolis in September 1786 to consider federal union—but only five states sent representatives. This group then decided upon a convention of all states to be held in Philadelphia in 1787.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Miracle at Philadelphia**

It was at this Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia that a miracle was performed—the enactment of the Constitution of the United States of America. In a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph in 1833, the Lord revealed that he had “established the Constitution of this land by the hand of wise men whom he raised up for this purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood.” (D&C 101:80)

Who were these wise men that the Lord raised up for this purpose?

### **Makers of the Constitution**

They included:

*George Washington, the experienced soldier, the levelheaded leader whom all trusted because of his*

*dedication without selfish motives; the honest, clear-sighted inspirer of men; a firm believer in a strong federal union.*

*And Benjamin Franklin, the best diplomat of his day, in America or in Europe; highly skilled in dealing with other men; with a great concept of a federal union for the colonies.*<sup>26</sup>

Franklin was seventy years old when the war broke out. He was the tenth son of seventeen children born to his father. Since he was his “tithe” son, the father wanted him to enter the ministry. When he decided against the ministry he was apprenticed to his brother, James, a printer. Here Benjamin learned the printing trade and subsequently became a newspaper publisher.

*He was an avid reader and a profound student all his life. By the time he was twenty-three, he had his own newspaper, the Pennsylvania Gazette, which eventually became the Saturday Evening Post. . . .*

*He founded the University of Pennsylvania and was a leading factor in establishing the first hospital in Philadelphia. As a self-taught man he spoke French, Italian, Spanish, German, and Latin.*

*He set up the first mail-delivery system in Philadelphia and was prominent in extending such service elsewhere in the United States and Canada, including Quebec and Montreal.*

*He organized Philadelphia’s first fire department and reformed the police department.*

*He promoted the first daylight savings time in America.*

*His inventions were numerous. . . . William Pitt, great British statesman, told the House of Lords that Franklin should be rated with Isaac Newton as a scientist, so highly was he regarded in Europe.*

*Franklin was the only man to sign all four of the following documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Alliance with France, the Treaty of Peace with England, and the Constitution of the United States. The Europeans*

*themselves said that he was the ablest American diplomat ever sent abroad.*<sup>27</sup>

Another member was “John Adams [second President of the United States, a] great parliamentarian, diplomat, experienced minister to European nations, teacher, farmer, lawyer; a patriot through and through, a believer in an American Union.”

Another member was:

*Thomas Jefferson, [our third President] a giant in every sense; skilled in statesmanship; highly educated; fluent writer and trained lawyer, with a clear view of the meaning of freedom; a notable advocate of a federal union for the colonies.*<sup>28</sup>

*. . . Although preeminently a statesman, Jefferson had many other sides. He was a skilled lawyer and writer, a naturalist, a farmer, an architect, a musician, a linguist, a philosopher, a botanist, and a paleontologist. It is said that some of his chief interests were fossils, mathematics, and grammar. He read Latin, French, Greek, and Spanish. He compiled Indian vocabularies, studied fauna and flora, and had a hobby of collecting old coins.*

*As a connoisseur of art, he had one of the finest collections of sculpture and paintings in America. He was a graduate of William and Mary College, an outstanding jurist, and a Virginian, one of ten children.*<sup>29</sup>

When Jefferson died July 4, 1826—on the same day that John Adams also died—he had left an epitaph to be inscribed upon his tomb: “Author of the Declaration of Independence, of the Statute for Religious Liberty in Virginia, and Founder of the University of Virginia.” He considered these of more importance than being President.

Another member was:

*James Madison [who became our] fourth president. . . . By some he was called the “father of the Constitution” for his valiant labors in its behalf.*

*He served well with Washington and was Jefferson's secretary of state, after a long period in Congress. . . .*

*He was a scholar of great attainment. He knew both Hebrew and Greek. Although he was one of the youngest men in the Continental Congress, he was one of the most skilled. He led the debates on the Bill of Rights. He was one of the great men of that day who sought to abolish slavery. To use his words, he pleaded for "the extinguishment of slavery in the United States."<sup>30</sup>*

*James Monroe was the fifth president. He had been a soldier in Washington's continental army, having joined when eighteen years old. He became a captain and was appointed an aide to General Lafayette. Washington spoke of him as a brave, active, and sensible officer.*

*He was a pupil and protege of Jefferson in the law. . . .*

*He was the author of the Monroe Doctrine, America's most famous foreign policy statement. He was an Episcopalian and a lawyer. He was U.S. minister to both France and England, was secretary of state and secretary of war, and served successfully in Congress. He too was a Virginian.<sup>31</sup>*

*John Quincy Adams, the sixth in this series of Revolutionary War patriots to hold the office of president, was in fact but a youth during the open warfare. However, having been born and reared in the home of his father, the great John Adams, he was effectively indoctrinated and trained in all of the fundamentals for which the Americans had fought.*

*. . . [He] came to power March 4, 1825. [While] he lacked the advice of such men as Washington, Franklin, and Hamilton, all of whom were now dead, he had been trained well by his father in all of the philosophies of free government. . . .*

*He had studied in Paris, at The Hague, in Amsterdam, and at Harvard. He was a lawyer and university professor. He had served as minister to Prussia, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. He had served also as secretary of state and as a member of the U.S. Senate. . . .*

*[He] was a man of impeccable character and was regarded as one of the most effective congressmen of his time. He was so persuasive in his public speaking that he was dubbed "Old Man Eloquence."<sup>32</sup>*

Other members of the Constitutional Convention were:

*Robert Morris, close friend of Washington and his host while the general did his business in Philadelphia. . . .*

*Gouverneur Morris, lawyer and graduate of Columbia College, forerunner to Columbia University.*

*John Blair and George Wythe, prominent judges, Wythe being also on the faculty of William and Mary College Department of Law.*

*James Wilson, lawyer, graduate of three Scottish universities.*

*James McClury of Virginia, physician, educated at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and a surgeon during the war. . . .*

*George Mason, who in May 1776 had drafted the Virginia Declaration of Rights, upon which Jefferson drew heavily in his draft of the Declaration of Independence in July of the same year.*

*John Rutledge of South Carolina, governor of the state during the war and a member of both first and second Continental Congresses.*

*Robert Yates, justice of the Supreme Court.*

*Highly gifted Alexander Hamilton, lawyer, aide to General Washington during the war, member of the Continental Congress; representative from New York [and probably the most outspoken leader for a strong federal government].*

*Alexander Martin, governor of North Carolina.*

*Hugh Williamson, physician and scientist.*

*Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, educated in England at both Westminster and Oxford universities, a brigadier general in the Continental army.*

*David Brearley, chief justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court.*

*John Marshall, young Richmond lawyer, later chief justice of the Supreme Court, one of the brilliant minds of that day. . . .*

*Then there were other such worthies as John Hancock, John Wentworth, Jr., and Samuel Adams, not to mention many more.*<sup>33</sup>

*It is noteworthy that six of them not only sustained the war for independence and helped establish the Constitution, but they also became presidents of the United States as well—the first six—in succession.*<sup>34</sup>

Although today many in our country have a distrust of lawyers, caused undoubtedly by the young, inexperienced, pseudo lawyers serving President Nixon, it should be here noted that many, if not the majority, of the framers of the Constitution were lawyers and their training thus equipped them under the inspiration of God to draft the Constitution of our country and made possible the formation of our Republic.

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in an address to the Los Angeles County Bar Association of February 24, 1944, spoke of the indispensable place of lawyers in our society:

*Upon the bench and the bar of the country rests the great responsibility of seeing that our liberties and free institutions are preserved. Legislators may be incompetent, executives may be dishonest, but if the bench and the bar be honest and filled with integrity, then under the Constitution, the people are secure, and free institutions will still live with us. But security and liberty both take flight where the [bar and/or] the judiciary [are] corrupt. . . .*

*It was an extremely difficult situation which confronted the delegates [to the Convention]: men of strong ideas and personalities, all of differing backgrounds and interests—trying to blend and to weld themselves into a workable, cohesive whole. Progress was slow. Benjamin Franklin, after several frustrating weeks, finally rose to his feet.*

*The small progress we have made, after four or five weeks close attendance and continual reasonings with each other—our different*

*sentiments on almost every question. . . . producing almost as many noes as ayes, is methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of human understanding. We indeed seem to feel our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government, and examined the different forms of those republics which having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution, now no longer exist. And we have viewed modern states all round Europe, but find none of their constitutions suitable to our circumstances.*

*In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understanding?*<sup>35</sup>

*Franklin then proceeded to remind the convention that at the beginning of the war with England the Continental Congress had had prayers for divine protection—and in the very same room. He continued:*

*Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were generously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of Superintending providence in our favor. To that kind of providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend?*

*. . . I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs the affairs of men . . . If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground unseen by him, is it probable an empire could arise without his aid? I firmly believe this, and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this*

*political building no better than the builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded and we ourselves shall become a reproach and by word down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance despair of establishing governments of human wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest.*

*I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service. [Emphasis added]<sup>36</sup>*

*Franklin's motion was promptly seconded by Roger Sherman—but it did not carry; in fact, it was not even voted upon.<sup>37</sup> According to Madison, Hamilton “and several others” were fearful that the calling in of a clergyman at so late a stage might lead the public to suspect there was dissension; and Williamson of North Carolina flatly said everyone knew the real reason for not engaging a chaplain was that the convention had no funds.<sup>38</sup> And so, says the historian Samuel Elliott Morison*

*Franklin's motion was lost, not because the delegates disbelieved in prayer, but because they had no money to pay a chaplain. The states which had elected them provided neither salary nor expense account.<sup>39</sup>*

*Neither Washington, who presided at the Convention, nor Franklin was a member of any church, but both were believers in God. . . .*

*But despite their belief in God and prayer, one of the most striking things about this incident is that all of the delegates, including Franklin and Washington, were so impregnated with the notion, common even today, that it was necessary to have a professional clergyman, hired for the very*

*purpose, perform this function—that the idea did not occur to any of them that such was totally unnecessary—that one of their own number could have invoked the aid of God! Therefore, ordination to the great work which they were doing had not thus far removed the veil from their eyes.*

*Notwithstanding Franklin's motion failed, his suggestion had been salutary, calling an assembly of doubting minds to a realization that destiny herself sat as a guest and witness in this room. [Emphasis added]<sup>40</sup>*

Ultimately the Convention completed its work, a form of constitution was agreed upon; but only after much bitter opposition was it finally ratified by the colonies; and in due course Washington was elected the first president. In the words of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., it was a “government with three distinct, separate branches [executive, legislative, and judicial] each mutually independent of the other, with no power of delegation or appropriation of rights or power by any one to or from any other.” This plan, which was new in the affairs of men, was designed to have each branch act as checks and balances on the others. It was later declared by the great leader John Gladstone, who, although a British statesman, was sympathetic to the colonies, as “the greatest document ever struck off by the hands of man.” What was unknown by Gladstone was that the “hands of men” were being guided by the overriding wisdom of a divine Providence.

The Constitutional Convention, at which the Constitution was drafted, lasted from May until September. Establishing a consensus among thirteen colonies of different interests and prejudices was not an easy matter. One of the great differences, which was only natural, was that the large states did not want to have the smaller states have the same power as they. On the other hand, the smaller states did not want to be dominated by the larger states. The result

was a compromise, proposed by Benjamin Franklin, that there be a senate in which each state would be represented by two senators. This would give equal power to both the small and large states, and was a concession to the smaller states. There should then be a house of representatives, in which the representation from each state was to be based on population. This was a concession to the larger states. Any legislation had to be passed by both houses which gave protection to both the small and large states. Even then it had to be signed by the president to become law. If vetoed by the president, it became law only when passed by a two-thirds vote of both houses.

This proposal, known as the “Great Compromise,” saved the Constitutional Convention from failing. There were other compromises which also permitted the Constitutional Fathers to continue their providential work. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., stated:

*Significantly, the Constitution contained in Article VI a provision not to be found elsewhere in the government of any nation of the world—indeed, contrary to the actual practices of the rest of the world:*

*. . . no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification of any Office or public Trust under the United States.<sup>41</sup>*

“But Jefferson, a deist, was not satisfied. He was . . . absent from the Convention as an envoy to France. He liked the Constitution and became one of its strongest supporters.”<sup>42</sup> In a letter to Madison, he said, “The Constitution . . . is the wisest ever yet presented to men.”<sup>43</sup> But he was unhappy because it contained no Bill of Rights. In a letter to Washington from Paris, he listed this as one of the two things he disliked; the other was the perpetual reelectability of the President.<sup>44</sup> One of Washington’s first acts as president was to work for and to sign into law when passed by Congress, the

first ten amendments which comprise our Bill of Rights. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., continued:

*The very first of the rights, spelled out in the very first amendment of the ten, related to the separation of church and state; and, together with the clause which was Article VI already mentioned, this revolutionary new principle of complete separation of church and state was accomplished.*

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. [Emphasis added]*

*Responsibility for the principle of separation of church and state belongs to Jefferson; he it was who had been author in 1785 of the language in the laws of Virginia effecting such a separation. For his pains he had incurred the enmity of the clergy of his state, who labeled him an infidel. But of all his accomplishments, this was among those which he cherished most—for he had seen in Europe the negative effect upon freedom of a union between church and state.*

*The principle of religious freedom already had been recognized by Rhode Island and Maryland; but it was the Virginia principle which was taken over and firmly imbedded in the new federal Constitution.*

*With regard to the entire First Amendment [Charles] McCabe . . . [columnist in the San Francisco Chronicle,] has stated:*

*That one sentence is, it can be argued, the most revolutionary bit of law ever enacted. Nothing like it had ever been heard of before. Its enforcement, which is not complete to this day, has caused much storm and tumult in our land, but it has been the cement that has kept us together as a free people. [Emphasis added]<sup>45</sup>*

Of the Constitution in general and this First Amendment in particular, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said:

*. . . I firmly and earnestly believe that the Constitution is an inspired document designed by our Maker to set up a government which would make sure and secure the rights set forth in the Bill of Rights, and particularly the right of freedom of conscience and worship.*<sup>46</sup>

### **Guiding Hand of Providence**

Although many members of the Constitutional Convention neither belonged to any church or professed to be of religious persuasion, it is apparent that the leaders believed in a divine providence and openly sought and acknowledged the guiding hand of the Lord in all that they did.

George Washington, in his inaugural address, stated:

*. . . we ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained. . .*<sup>47</sup>

John Adams, our second President, in his inaugural address, prayed:

*. . . may that Being who is supreme over all, the Patron of Order, the Fountain of Justice, the Protector in all ages of the world, of virtuous liberty, continue His blessing upon this nation and its Government and give it all possible success and duration consistent with the ends of His providence.*<sup>48</sup>

Thomas Jefferson, in taking the powers of the Presidency, said to his countrymen:

*I shall need, too, the favor of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our fathers, as Israel of old, from their native land and planted them in*

*a country flowing with all the necessaries and comforts of life; who has covered our infancy with His providence and our riper years with His wisdom and power, and to whose goodness I ask you to join in supplication with me that He will enlighten the mind of your servants, guide their councils and prosper their measures, that whatsoever they do shall result in your good, and shall secure to you the peace, friendship and approbation of all nations.*<sup>49</sup>

James Madison:

*Madison also recognized the hand of God in the creation of the new nation. Said he, on being inaugurated March 4, 1809: "In these [the virtues of my fellow citizens] my confidence will under every difficulty be best placed, next to that which we have all been encouraged to feel in the guardianship and guidance of the Almighty Being whose power regulates the destiny of nations whose blessings have been so conspicuously dispensed to this rising republic. . .*"<sup>50</sup>

James Monroe:

*Like his predecessors, [Monroe] recognized the hand of God in the creation of America, and prayed at his first inauguration that "the Almighty . . . will be graciously pleased to continue to us this protection which He has already conspicuously displayed in our favor.*<sup>51</sup>

In his inaugural address John Quincy Adams echoed the same providential belief:

*I shall look for whatever success may attend my public service, and knowing that "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain," with fervent supplications for His favor, to His over-ruling providence, I commit with humble but fearless confidence, my own fate and the future destinies of my country.*<sup>52</sup>



### **Confirmation of Divinity of Constitution by Church Leaders**

Not only was the Constitution adopted by “wise men” whom the Lord had “raised up” for that purpose, but it was accepted by the leaders of our Church as having been a heavenly inspired document.

*The Prophet Joseph Smith said that “the Constitution of the United States is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God. It is a heavenly banner. . . .”*<sup>53</sup>

Brigham Young also recognized that the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were inspired by heaven, although he did not think their documents were perfect. He further thought that in the intervening 100 years from the time of the Declaration of Independence that those who built the superstructure had built far short of their privileges. Said he:

*The signers of the Declaration of Independence and the framers of the Constitution were inspired from on high to do that work. But was that which was given to them perfect, not admitting of any addition whatever? No; for if men know anything, they must know that the Almighty has never yet found a man in mortality that was capable, at the first intimation, at the first impulse, to receive anything in a state of entire perfection. They laid the foundation, and it was for after generations to rear the superstructure upon it. It is a progressive—a gradual work.*

*The general Constitution of our country is good, and a wholesome government could be framed upon it, for it was dictated by the invisible operations of the Almighty; he moved upon Columbus to launch forth upon the trackless deep to discover the American Continent; he moved upon the signers of the Declaration of Independence; and he moved upon Washington to fight and conquer, in the same way as he moved upon ancient and modern Prophets, each being inspired to accomplish the*

*particular work he was called to perform in the times, seasons, and dispensations of the Almighty. God’s purposes, in raising up these men and inspiring them with daring sufficient to surmount every opposing power, was to prepare the way for the formation of a true republican government. They laid its foundation; but when others came to build upon it, they reared a superstructure far short of their privileges, if they had walked uprightly as they should have done.*<sup>54</sup>

Some nine years after the death of Brigham Young, and

*During a time of great stress for the Latter-day Saints, when persecution was high, President John Taylor [Brigham Young’s successor] said “that as a people we . . . stand by and sustain the Constitution in every Particular. . . .”*

*He said that while others may trample upon the rights and privileges granted by that great document, and treat it as a light thing, it is for us to rally round the flag of the Union, to be loyal and patriotic, and maintain intact the Constitution; and thus we shall be found doing what Joseph Smith said should come to pass—that when the nation should trample under foot the Constitution, the Elders of Israel in this Church would be found ready to uphold and sustain it in the interest of themselves and the people of this great nation, and would stand by its principles when all others forsook it.*<sup>55</sup>

### **Baptism in St. George Temple**

The righteous conduct of the Constitutional Fathers, their acknowledgment of providential help and willingness to follow the promptings of the Spirit, is attested by their appearing to President Wilford Woodruff in the St. George Temple, demanding he should attend to the ordinances of the Lord in their behalf. The precise statement of President Woodruff is:

*. . . I am going to bear my testimony to this assembly, if I never do it again in my life,*

*that those men who laid the foundation of this American government and signed the Declaration of Independence were the best spirits the God of heaven could find on the face of the earth. . . .*

*Every one of those men that signed the Declaration of Independence, with General [George] Washington, called upon me, as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Temple at St. George, two consecutive nights, and demanded at my hands that I should go forth and attend to the ordinances of the House of God for them. . . .*

*Brother McAllister baptized me for all those men, and then I told those brethren that it was their duty to go into the Temple and labor until they had got endowments for all of them. They did it.<sup>56</sup>*

### **Restoration of the Gospel**

With the adoption of the Constitution and the formation of a government which not only permitted freedom of religion, but actually affirmatively prohibited interference with an individual's freedom of expression or religious beliefs, the time had arrived for the restoration of the gospel. Ben Franklin died in 1790, just two years after the adoption of the Constitution, and Washington died in 1799, eleven years thereafter. Of him at the time of his death Thomas Jefferson wrote:

*Never did nature and fortune combine more perfectly to make a man great, and to place him in . . . an everlasting remembrance.<sup>57</sup>*

Their deaths removed the two who were often claimed as being most influential in forming the Constitution, although Madison probably had more to do with drafting it.

Six years later, to the very month of Washington's death, Joseph Smith was born. At his youthful age of fourteen, the Father and Son appeared to him in vision in the Sacred Grove. The gospel of Jesus Christ, which the peoples had themselves removed from the earth by their own apostasy some centuries

before, was again restored. It was now lawful, even by human standards, for the "stone" to be cut out of the mountain without hands, for the "God of Heaven (Himself) to set up a Kingdom," which "shall stand forever."

The First Vision was in 1820. Both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died on Independence Day, July 4, 1826; thus Franklin and the first three presidents had departed before the Church was organized. In 1830, 146 years ago, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which is the "kingdom of God," was organized, never to be taken again from the earth, and which was to roll forth and fill the whole earth. James Monroe died July 4, 1831, one year thereafter, and James Madison, known as the Father of the Constitution, died in 1836. Thus, by six years after the organization of the Church, our first five presidents, all great instruments in perfecting the Constitution, had died.

Today we have 23,000 young missionaries taking that gospel to many parts of the world. With the construction of the Language Training Mission at Brigham Young University, which will now train 18,000 missionaries in foreign languages in one year, and for which enlargement plans have already been made, many of us here may see the time when as many as 50,000 or more missionaries will be in the field at one time.

Although this is the greatest event in history since the earthly advent of the Savior, time will not permit me to expand on it here—nor is it necessary with this audience, because all of you know its eternal significance. However, all members of the Church and others interested should read *The Great Prologue* by Elder Mark E. Petersen and, when published, *The World Discovers America* by W. Glenn Harmon to be inspired by the glorious events that will take place, as well as saddened by the scourge of the wicked that will follow their own iniquity.

**The Conditional Promise to America—How Will It Be Fulfilled?**

I now turn from the vision of Nephi to a promise of the Lord, also made in the day of the Nephites, as to what may happen to the peoples of this country, both in ancient America and after the restoration of the gospel. The events told to Nephi were in a vision as to what would actually happen. The other is a promise of what would happen to ancient America and what will happen to us if we do not live in accordance with the commandments of the Lord.

1. The Prophet Lehi, the father of Nephi, told his people that

*. . . this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever. . . .*

*But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord—having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise—behold, I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them.*

*Yea, he will bring other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten.*

*Yea, as one generation passeth to another there shall be bloodsheds, and great visitations among*

*them; wherefore, my sons, I would that ye would remember; yea, I would that ye would hearken unto my words.<sup>58</sup>*

2. The prophet Jacob taught the same doctrine:

*Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ . . . .<sup>59</sup>*

Thus the people of Lehi, like the peoples of Israel, of Judah, and Jared, were promised that if they would follow the commandments of the Lord they would be free people, but if they failed to keep these commandments they would lose their liberty and either be scattered or fall as a nation. Because they failed to keep the commandments, they failed to survive as nations. The Lamanites were scattered and are the Indians of South and North America today.

This promise and hope extended not only to the ancient civilizations of America but to present and future civilizations on this continent. Whether, therefore, the Constitution and our government will be preserved will depend upon the conduct of ourselves and succeeding generations.

It therefore behooves us to examine the performance of our country as a nation and the lives and morals of our people. In examining these trends, let us start with the divergence in political views between our country today and those of our Founding Fathers, and then note the lives and morals of our people.

I start with the political views because President John Taylor informed us that the Elders of Israel should

*. . . understand that they have something to do with the world politically as well as religiously, that it is as much their duty to study correct political principles as well as religious.<sup>60</sup>*

*Besides the preaching of the gospel, we have another mission, namely, the perpetuation of the free agency of man and the maintenance of liberty, freedom, and the rights of man.*<sup>61</sup>

I lay stress on this because there are some who try to differentiate between advice given by our leaders on religious matters and advice which they allege pertains to political matters, claiming that we do not need to follow the Prophet when he advises us on political matters. Of course we don't; neither are we required to follow him on spiritual matters; neither are we required to keep the Ten Commandments, for the Lord himself has given us our free agency. But if we are faithful members of the Church, and if we want the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, we are under the same moral obligation to follow his advice on political as on religious matters.

The Constitution of our country set up a republic, founded on the cornerstone of individual liberty and personal responsibility. It was dedicated to the proposition that as individuals we are to provide for our own welfare and not be dominated by or dependent on government. The Constitutional Fathers themselves had a dislike for government interference with our lives and government domination.

Their dislike of government domination was expressed by none other than George Washington, the Father of our Country, in these words:

*Government is not reason, it is not eloquence—it is a force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master.*

Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and founder of the Democratic party, advised us not only that the government governs best which governs

least, but warned against the dangerous situation which haunts us today. He said:

*I place economy among the first and most important virtues, and public debt as the greatest of dangers to be feared. . . . To preserve our independence, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. . . . We must make our choice between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude. . . . If we run into such debts . . . we must be taxed in our meat and drink, in our necessities and our comforts, in our labors and our amusements. . . . If we can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people, under the pretense of caring for them, they will be happy. [Emphasis added]*

But within fifty years after the founding of our country certain people began to preach the socialistic concept that instead of the government's being a protector of our liberties, it should become a provider of our economic wants. Robert Owen, of Scotland, for instance, in the days of Joseph Smith, tried to convince Americans that their best interests lay in collective equality rather than individual liberty. In 1824 he bought 30,000 acres of land in Indiana and established his utopian colony of "New Harmony." In his opening address to the pioneer members of the settlement, Owen said:

*I am come to this country to introduce an entire new state of society; to change it from an ignorant, selfish system to an enlightened social system which shall gradually unite all interests into one, and remove all causes for contest between individuals.*<sup>62</sup>

However, after three years of hard struggle, the experiment, which had taken most of Owen's money, failed. His ideas of collective ownership and the absolute equality of compensation, irrespective of effort or productivity, had proved to be unsound.

Since that time, over 200 other experiments in municipal socialism in this country have also failed.

From the beginning, the presidents of our Church have opposed this trend to a socialistic or welfare state, in whatever form it presented itself. Joseph Smith categorically declared he did not believe in “socialism”;<sup>63</sup> President Brigham Young denounced socialism or the welfare state by saying, “It is a poor, unwise and very imbecile people who cannot take care of themselves”;<sup>64</sup> President John Taylor described it as a “species of robbery”;<sup>65</sup> President Heber J. Grant characterized it by saying, “The Spirit that would have us get something for nothing is from the lower regions”;<sup>66</sup> and President David O. McKay warned, “It is not the government’s duty to support you.”<sup>67</sup> The views of the Church leaders were undoubtedly predicated on the fact that socialism or the welfare state deprives man of his free agency and the rewards of his own efforts. George Bernard Shaw made this frank disclosure of the socialists’ reliance on the ruthless power of the state (views which you will immediately recognize as analogous to those of Lucifer rather than those of Christ) in the following words:

*I also made it quite clear that under Socialism you would not be allowed to be poor. You would be forcibly fed, clothed, lodged, taught and employed whether you liked it or not. If it were discovered that you had not character and industry enough to be worth all this trouble, you might possibly be executed in a kindly manner: but whilst you were permitted to live you would have to live well.*<sup>68</sup>

Until the advent of the New Deal in 1932, the political philosophy of freedom from government and individual responsibility as distinguished from a welfare state was uniformly followed by all presidents, regardless of party. The one great exception was the enactment of the graduated income tax law in 1913, which is the most significant legislation of this century. It came into being only by virtue of a constitutional amendment, the Supreme Court having

held that such a concept was unconstitutional. And even then a review of the debates in Congress shows that the proponents of the income tax law were laboring under the honest delusion that in peace time the tax would not exceed 2 percent, but in times of war it might “soar” to 5 percent. Instead it has now pyramided to extremes beyond the wildest dreams ever proposed by Karl Marx in his Communist Manifesto, having pyramided until the tax cut of a few years ago to 91 percent on the higher brackets. It still stands at around 70 percent.

With the ease afforded by the income tax amendment to raise large sums of money from the citizens, theretofore impossible, Congress fell prey to the temptation to adopt many new programs requiring the expenditure of almost untold billions of dollars, founded, in large part, on the philosophy that it is the duty of government to provide for its citizens, rather than have them provide for themselves.

The result is that by departing from the advice of Jefferson, who was undoubtedly expressing the views of our Constitutional Fathers, today we have an admitted indebtedness of \$494.3 billion dollars. It was only five billion dollars when Franklin Delano Roosevelt came into power. If we take into consideration goods already delivered and services already rendered, neither of which are paid for, the total present and accrued liabilities of the United States amount to over \$1 trillion, which is more than \$5,000 for every man, woman, and child.<sup>69</sup>

In 1973 our total government expenditures, federal, state, and local, exceeded 40 percent of the total income of all people in our country.<sup>70</sup>

In 1974 an average of 64,656,000 persons received some type of unemployment compensation each month in the United States. This represented about 30 percent of the entire population.<sup>71</sup> It has gone up since then. At present (1976) there are 25 million people on full relief.<sup>72</sup> This means that about 8.4 percent of the population of the United States are

on full relief. Public assistance expenditures totaled \$21.4 billion in 1973.<sup>73</sup> This is completely contrary to the advice of Jefferson that if we can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people, under the pretense of caring for them, they will be happy. We now know that since it has become a national policy to care for them they are not happy. Happily for us as a people, our Church has consistently opposed these government handouts. In setting up the Church Welfare Program, President Grant said:

*Our primary purpose was to set up, in so far as it might be possible, a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self-respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership.*<sup>74</sup>

On August 6 this year, at Amsterdam, Holland, President Kimball reiterated the consistent view of our Church leaders that people in need should rely on their families and the Church for support, rather than any government welfare program.

Lest you be unaware of the extent of the present social revolution and the change in our content of government, let me introduce some authorities as to just how socialistic we have become.

I call as my chief witness, Norman Thomas, for many years Socialist candidate for president of the United States. After seeing one by one the principles of his party adopted by others, he retired as the perennial Socialist candidate for president, intimating that it was no longer necessary for the Socialist party to continue.

I call as my second witness Mr. Earl Browder, former leader of the Communist party in America, who, in a pamphlet

published in 1950, stated that socialism was further advanced in the United States than in socialist Britain,<sup>75</sup> that although we did not have governmental ownership, real control by government was much greater in the United States than in Britain.

Since the time of this statement (26 years ago) we have gone much, much farther down the road of the welfare state. President Lyndon Johnson, in a speech to senior citizens 12 years ago, boldly stated:

*We are going to try to take all the money we think is unnecessarily being spent and take it from the "haves" and give it to the "have nots" that need it so much.*<sup>76</sup>

This is the code under which the state will take from you your property and determine how it will be spent and to whom it will be given—a theory of government which was expressly rejected by our Constitutional Fathers in favor of the concept of freedom and individual responsibility.

This departure from the philosophy of our Constitutional Fathers was foreseen by at least one of our Constitutional Fathers and by a great French soldier-statesman. As Benjamin Franklin was emerging from the Convention which brought forth our Constitution, some women tugged at his coat and asked him what had been proposed for the American people. He replied, "A Republic, if you can keep it."

Later on, the wise Franklin said that he thought the government they had given to the people would "likely . . . be well-administered for a course of years, but that it can only end in despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic government."

The great French soldier-statesman deToqueville, after visiting America about 140 years ago and studying what was then called our "Noble Experiment in Government," wrote that if the time ever came when the

people were permitted to vote themselves monies out of the public treasury, self-government by responsible men would become an impossibility.<sup>77</sup>

That time, I regret to say, faces us today, for our Supreme Court, by reversing over 150 of its prior decisions, now permits us, contrary to many earlier decisions and the intent of our Constitutional Fathers, to appropriate money out of the public treasury for almost anything we want. As a result we now have a document prepared for the House of Representatives, consisting of 1080 pages, which lists the thousands of federal assistance programs now in operation. This is startling evidence that we are today becoming a welfare state and largely turning our backs on the Republic of our fathers which was founded upon personal liberty and individual responsibility and effort.

Of course we still preserve the outward forms prescribed by our Constitutional Fathers, except we substitute the name *Democracy for Republic*—though they are two different kinds of government. In a democracy the majority may do anything they want, such as the Pilgrim Fathers did in executing those with different religious beliefs; in a republic even the majority is restricted by constitutional limitations. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the Supreme Court has ignored many but, thank God, not all the restrictions—especially the guarantees of free speech and freedom of worship. We still also have a pledge of allegiance to our country and the *Republic* for which it stands, although many vestiges of the Republic of our fathers have disappeared. We still have a president, a Supreme Court, and a Congress, but in many areas they often proceed on different premises than our fathers intended. In the words of Dean Inge:

*History seems to show that the powers of evil have won their greatest triumphs by capturing the organizations which were formed to defeat them, and that when the devil has thus changed the*

*contents of the bottles, he never alters the labels. The fort may have been captured by the enemy, but it still flies the flag of its defenders.*<sup>78</sup>

### **Great Britain's Entry into Socialism**

I suggest that it is not without significance that concomitant with Great Britain's entry into socialism, the Church of England adopted an official report stating that the work of the churches must start from the premise that Britain is a pagan nation—over one-half of the population of that country belong to no church. They have substituted the false god of socialism, and rely on the socialistic state for their welfare rather than the providence of God. And after socialism is once accepted, it continues and has continued regardless of party. That is happening in this country.

### **Moral Decay in Our Nation**

Leaving the political and governmental aspect of our lives, let me review very quickly the demoralizing moral decay of our country which seems to be setting in.

1. *Serious Crime and Its Increase.* "The total of serious crimes reported in 1974 was 10,192,020—up 1,525,800 from 1973. Crimes classified by the FBI as 'serious' are murder, forcible rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, larceny and auto theft."<sup>79</sup> Of these there was a total of 20,600 murders for the year.<sup>80</sup> Based on the FBI figures, that means there were 20 serious crimes every minute. Specifically, there was one murder every 26 minutes of the year, one forcible rape every 10 minutes, one auto theft every 32 seconds, and one burglary every 11 seconds.

Based on these statistics, just while we have been sitting in this meeting (1 hour), there have been over 400 thefts of automobiles and over 900 burglaries. Today crime is costing this nation well over \$60 billion per year.<sup>81</sup>

2. *Juvenile Delinquency.* By 1973, 1,717,000 juveniles (persons under 18) were arrested as

compared to 527,000 in 1960—an increase of over 300 percent.<sup>82</sup>

“Youths under 18 accounted for 27 percent of all 1974 arrests, while 43 percent of those arrested were under 21 and 58 percent were under 25.”<sup>83</sup>

3. *Divorce*. In 1974, 4.6 out of every 10.5 marriages (almost one out of every two) ended in divorce.<sup>84</sup>

4. *Illegitimacy*. In 1973 there were 407,300 illegitimate births in the United States. This represented 13 percent of all births. Undoubtedly the numbers would have been much higher without the huge number of abortions performed.<sup>85</sup>

5. *Abortion*. It is estimated that legal abortions this year will be nearly 1,000,000.<sup>86</sup> In 1973 about one of every seven children conceived was aborted.<sup>87</sup> The number aborted is now higher than that and will continue to be higher in view of the opinion of the Supreme Court that young girls no longer need the consent of their parents.

6. *Working Mothers*. In 1975 there were 36,507,000 working women in the United States. Of these, 22,717,000 were married, and of those married, 11,409,000 were mothers with children between the ages of birth and 18. This means almost one of every two married working women left her children at home with someone else.<sup>88</sup>

7. *Diminishing Birth rate*. In 1972 there were only 3,258,000 births as compared to 4,258,000 in 1960. In 1972 there were only 15.6 births per 1,000 as compared with 23.7 births per 1,000 in 1960.<sup>89</sup> Since 1972 the birth rate caused by the false philosophy in favor of limiting families to two children, the use of the “pill,” and the availability of contraceptives by the government for which you and I pay in taxes has been going down.

8. *Immorality*. Between 1950 and 1973, the rate of illegitimacy among 15 to 19 year-old girls increased from 56,000 to 204,900—almost 400 percent.<sup>90</sup>

9. *Liquor v. Education*. In 1972, \$19.9 billion was spent for liquor<sup>91</sup> as compared with only \$16 billion for higher education.<sup>92</sup>

10. *Tobacco v. Churches*. In 1972, \$7.7 billion was spent on tobacco and tobacco products,<sup>93</sup> only \$844 million was spent for the construction of religious buildings.<sup>94</sup>

11. *Church Membership*. In 1973, 62 percent of all Americans professed to belong to a church,<sup>95</sup> but only 40 percent attended church in 1972 (also in 1972, 62 percent of all Americans professed to be members of a church).<sup>96</sup> You will be interested in knowing there are more Latter-day Saint members in Utah, Arizona, Nevada, and Idaho combined than members belonging to all other churches, but that is because most citizens of three of those states do not belong to any church.

This appalling and steady increase in crime and the letdown in moral standards necessarily raises the question of what will happen to America.

A few historical parallels might be significant. President J. Reuben Clark thus tells of the downfall of the Jaredite civilization:

*We are not given the step-by-step backsliding of this Jaredite civilization till it reached the social and governmental chaos the record sets out, but those steps seem wholly clear from the results. Put into modern terms, we can understand them. First there was a forsaking of the righteous life, and the working of wickedness; then must have come the extortion and oppression of the poor by the rich; then retaliation and reprisal by the poor against the rich; then would come a cry to share the wealth which should belong to all; then the easy belief that society owed every man a living whether he worked or not; then the keeping of a great body of idlers; then when community revenues failed to do this, as they always have failed and always will fail, a self-helping by one to the goods of his neighbor; and finally when the neighbor resisted, as resist he must, or starve with his family, then death to the neighbor*



and all that belonged to him. This was the decreed "fullness of iniquity."

Then came the end; the Jaredites were wiped out in accordance with "the everlasting decree of God." A nation had been born; it had grown to maturity; then to a powerful manhood; had then gone on to sin, decay, and destruction, and all because its people had refused to heed the promises and commandments of Him who is their Creator and Father, all because the people who possessed the land had failed "to serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ." (Ether 2:12)<sup>97</sup>

Does this have any of the ring of the present?

The masterly history by Will Durant entitled *The Story of Civilization*, volume three, entitled *Caesar and Christ*, covers the rise and fall of the Roman Empire. In listing the causes for the fall of Rome he states (in the words of President Ezra Taft Benson):

*The first group of causes he termed biological, and no doubt most fundamental. They had to do with the limitation of families, the deferment and avoidance of marriage, the refusal of men and women to shoulder the great responsibilities, God-ordained, of honorable parenthood. He mentioned that sexual excesses were indulged in commonly, both in and outside the marriage covenant. The operation of contraception and abortion was common. This, together with other things, resulted in reduced fertility. Sex ran riot, and moral decay resulted . . .*

*Then he lists with great emphasis the rising costs of government because of armies, doles, public works, expanding bureaucracy, a parasitic court, depreciation of currency, absorption of investment capital by confiscatory taxation.*

*Is there anything suggestive in this summary?*<sup>98</sup>

I know it will shock many of you to think that in a day when America is the leading power of the world, when Washington, D.C., has more influence than all other capitols of

the world put together, when the slightest hint from Washington helps to shape the policy of any country in the world either for or against, we should be talking about the possible fall of our nation. But I remind you that when Rome was decaying within, she thought she was invulnerable because there were still the Roman legions, the Roman swords, the Roman culture, and Roman law everywhere in the world. Indeed, Rome occupied a greater place of leadership in that day than does our own country today. But Rome was doomed, and why? Because she had substituted the false gods of government and moral irresponsibility for the true god of personal responsibility, integrity and self-reliance. Hence decay and corruption were inevitable. It was the boast of proud Augustus Caesar that he found a Rome of brick and left it of marble. But he also found the Romans free, and he left them slaves. He found the Romans hard-working, self-reliant, and self-supporting; he left them indolent, dependent on the state for their sustenance and for subsidies.

Near the end of his great book on the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, Edward Gibbon gives his reasons for the dissolution of the great political force which had held the civilized world together for more than 500 years. The principal ones included:

- Excessive spending by the central government.
- Unwillingness of the young men to bear arms in defense of their country.
- Overindulgence in luxury.
- Widespread sexual immorality and easy divorce, which destroyed the integrity of family life.
- The spread of effeminacy—girls looking and acting like men, men looking and acting like girls.
- Disregard of religion.

That was Rome, 1400 years ago. Do you recognize these symptoms in the United States today?

Were I left to my own to predict the future of our country, I might say that, with all its political excesses and the moral letdown in our country, we could well follow the decline of Rome and 21 other civilizations. Fortunately, however, we are informed by our prophetic leaders that, notwithstanding our false political philosophy and our moral decay, the kingdom of God, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, will survive. It will be followed, says Elder Petersen, by the kingdom of heaven, which will be merged with the kingdom of God when Christ reigns.<sup>99</sup> This does not mean, however, that our nation in its present form will continue—it means only that since this is the dispensation of the fullness of times, the gospel of Jesus Christ will not be taken from the earth, notwithstanding the ills of our society. President Joseph F. Smith told us that

*The kingdom of God is here to grow, to spread abroad, to take root in the earth, and to abide where the Lord has planted it by his own power and by his own word in the earth, never more to be destroyed nor to cease, but to continue until the purposes of the Almighty shall be accomplished, every whit that has been spoken of it by the mouths of the holy prophets since the world began.*<sup>100</sup>

As to the Church itself, President John Taylor has made this declaration:

*It has been asked . . . whether this kingdom will fail. I tell you in the name of Israel's God it will not fail. I tell you in the name of Israel's God it will roll forth, and that the things spoken of by the holy prophets in relation to it will receive their fulfillment. But in connection with this I will tell you another thing: a great many Latter-day Saints will fail, a great many of them are not now and never have been living up to their privileges, and*

*magnifying their callings and their priesthood, and God will have a reckoning with such people, unless they speedily repent.*<sup>101</sup>

However, in a letter to N. E. Seaton, publisher in Rochester, New York, on January 4, 1883, the prophet Joseph Smith

*predicted that the United States will be cleansed of the wicked by pestilence, hail, famine, and earthquake "to open and prepare the way for the return of the lost tribes of Israel."*<sup>102</sup>

The overflowing scourge he refers to is mentioned by the Lord in section 5 of the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein he says:

*For a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming.*

*Behold, I tell you these things, even as I also told the people of the destruction of Jerusalem [Matthew 24]; and my word shall be verified at this time as it hath hitherto been verified (D&C 5:19–20). [emphasis added]*<sup>103</sup>

President Wilford Woodruff has stated:

*I know as God lives that if this or any other government departs from the principles of truth, becomes ripened in iniquity, forsakes the Lord, forsakes the principles of life and liberty, the God of heaven will hold it responsible. Judgments will come upon the wicked. When men depart from the principles of truth and cleave unto darkness and wickedness they reap the whirlwind; they lay the foundation for desolation.*<sup>104</sup>

*In all the history of the dealings of God with man this one principle, sooner or later, has manifested itself: that virtue exalteth a nation, while sin is a reproach to any people. You will see that this has been manifested in the history of all nations under*

heaven—in their rise and progress and prosperity, and in their fall and decline and in their final overthrow and destruction. You will find in every instance that sin, error, darkness, falsehood, wrongdoing, have laid the foundation of the overthrow of every nation and city under heaven from the foundation of the world until the present time. What men sow they will reap, and what measure they measure to others will be measured unto them.<sup>105</sup>

We have a Constitution that was given by inspiration from God to man. I believe it is the best human form of government that was ever given to the human family. Now, I say if our rulers and governors become corrupt and attempt to trample those principles under their feet; though the nation itself might go to pieces, yet it is beyond the power of man to destroy the principles of the Constitution. They may destroy one another, yet the principles contained in that instrument will live, and the God of heaven will maintain them until Jesus Christ comes in the clouds of heaven to set up his throne in Jerusalem, and to reign on the earth a thousand years.<sup>106</sup>

I know that it has many times been stated that when the Constitution of this country would hang by a thread, the elders of our Church would step forth and save it. Unfortunately, however, there is no precise record of what he said, for his prediction rests in the memory of those who heard it, and there is a variance in their memories. All those who heard it and have written about it agree that he said the time would come when the Constitution would be in danger and hang by a single thread; three of them, Brigham Young,<sup>107</sup> Jedediah M. Grant,<sup>108</sup> and Eliza R. Snow,<sup>109</sup> recalled that he said that at this point the elders would step forth and save it, but Orson Hyde, in an address in the Old Tabernacle in Salt Lake City on January 3, 1858, said:

*It is said that Brother Joseph in his lifetime declared that the Elders of this Church should step forth at a particular time when the Constitution should be*

*in danger, and rescue it and save it. This may be so; but I do not recollect that he said exactly so. I believe he said something like this—that the time would come when the Constitution and the country would be in danger of an overthrow; and said he, “If the Constitution be saved at all, it will be by the Elders of this Church.” I believe this is about the language, as nearly as I can recollect it.<sup>110</sup>*

We must therefore conclude that, notwithstanding the present and the future intensified wickedness of the world, the kingdom of God (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) will survive; that the constitutional principles of our government will survive, and that the Constitution and our nation as at present constituted will probably survive—we cannot be sure of it with any certainty. In the words of Robert Muntzel,

*Great nations rise and fall—the people go from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependency, from dependency back again into bondage.<sup>111</sup>*

This history applies to us as well as other nations—we have been warned that we are in danger of losing our liberties and that, in the words of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.,

*Once lost, only blood will bring them back; and once lost, we of this Church will, in order to keep the Church going forward, have more sacrifices to make and more persecutions to endure than we have yet known, heavy as our sacrifices and grievous as our persecutions of the past have been.<sup>112</sup>*

It is known also, based on the statements of our prophetic leaders, that there will be a separation of the righteous and unrighteous and that there will be a scourge of the unrighteous and that only the righteous,

by loving the Creator and keeping His Commandments, will survive.

I close with the fervent prayer that our nation, as well as our Church, will be preserved; that God will assist us in preserving our liberties and freedom—for we realize, in the words of Somerset Maughan, that

*If a nation values anything more than freedom, it will lose its freedom; and the irony of it is that if it is comfort or money that it values more, it will lose that too.*<sup>113</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

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82. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*: 1975, p. 157.
83. "Sharpest Spurt Ever In Violence, Theft," *U.S. News and World Report*, 24 November 1975, p. 82.
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85. *Ibid.* p. 57.
86. *Good Housekeeping*, March 1976, p. 134.
87. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*: 1975, p. 51.
88. *Ibid.*, pp. 346–47.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 782.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 782.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 702.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
96. *New York Times*, 9 January 1972, p. 59.
97. *Prophets, Principles and National Survival*, Jerreld L. Newquist, p. 113; J. Reuben Clark, Jr., 1940, E-43:396.
98. *Prophets, Principles and National Survival*, p. 114; Ezra Taft Benson, CR-4/52:59–60.
99. Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue*, p. 105.
100. *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 76.
101. *Gospel Kingdom* p. 137, italics added; *The Great Prologue* p. 111.
102. *History of the Church*, 1:315; *The Great Prologue*, p. 110.
103. Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue*, p. 110–111.
104. *Journal of Discourses*. 25:11, January 6, 1884.
105. *Ibid.*, 25:6–7, January 6, 1884.
106. *Ibid.*, 22:346, October 23, 1881.
107. *Journal History*, July 4, 1854, quoted in *Deseret News* of December 15, 1948.
108. Tyler, *The Mormon Battalion*, p. 350.
109. *Deseret News Weekly*, January 19, 1870, p. 556.
110. *Journal of Discourses*, 6:152.
111. Robert Muntzel, *Manage Magazine* (January, 1961), This "Cycle of Civilization" was originally taken from an Italian scholar named Giambattista Vico, whose "Cycle of Civilization" from barbarism to and through civilization and back again to dispersion or barbarism was developed in the early 18th century. This same idea was subsequently developed in an elaborate form by Oswald Spengler in his book entitled *The Decline of the West*.
112. Conference Address, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Friday, April 7, 1944.
113. Somerset Maugham, *Strictly Personal*, 1941, Chapter 41.