

What Did the PIONEERS BRING?



President Stephen L Richards was born on June 18, 1879, in Mendon, Utah. He was called as an Apostle in 1917 and as First Counselor in the First Presidency in 1951. The following is an excerpt of an address he delivered at the April 1947 general conference, 100 years after the pioneers' arrival in the Salt Lake Valley.

By President Stephen L Richards (1879–1959)

First Counselor in the First Presidency

To understand the pioneers and their accomplishments, we must examine their motives. . . . They came for freedom and peace, as others have done. They came to make homes for themselves, as others have done. They came to worship God and practice their religion to the satisfaction of their consciences, as others have done; but here is one thing they came for which, so far as I know, has no counterpart in any other pioneer movement: they

came with the avowed purpose of establishing a society so that they would be able to take back to the civilization from which they had fled, yes, even to their persecutors, the principles of life and conduct which were the source of their own inspiration, cohesion, success, and happiness. . . .

What then did the pioneers bring? They brought industry in a measure that has seldom been equaled. They taught and practiced the gospel of work as

the foundation for success and happiness. . . .

They brought education and a love for the artistic and beautiful. . . .

They brought with them a high order of loyalty and a great capacity for firm devotion to the cause they espoused. . . .

I come now to the greatest thing of all which the pioneers brought with them, and that I characterize as wisdom, wisdom about the important things in life. . . .

First, consider the body of man. . . . The pioneers brought a new concept of the body which invested it with sacred significance. They taught that the body is the earthly tabernacle wherein the spirit of man, the literal child of God, is housed and that the body cannot be defiled or polluted or otherwise abused by taking into it poisons and deleterious substances without offering affront to God, whose Spirit dwells therein. . . . They brought with them a code of health rules. . . .

Second—character or personality. . . . [The pioneers] taught not only that man is the child of God, of the most noble lineage but that he is destined also, if he lives for it, to be associated with his Heavenly Father in carrying forth His eternal works in all time to come. . . .

Next—the family. . . . What was the wisdom the pioneers brought about the family? Why, they invested it with the noblest and most exalted attributes which have ever come to it in all the history of the world. They taught that it is not only

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a basic unit for happy life and progress here on this earth but that it constitutes also the very foundation of our hope for supreme exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our God. Indeed, the heaven we seek is little more than the projection of our homes into eternity. How

at variance with these lofty concepts of home and family are the tragic evils in domestic life today—divorce, broken homes, neglected, wayward children more to be pitied than abused because of the disintegration of family life.

. . . Oh, if the wisdom which these humble pioneers brought could only find application in the families of the world, what a boon it would be to the comfort and the happiness and the progress of humanity.

Lastly, . . . brotherhood. They taught, in the most realistic way, the concept of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples belonging to the family of God. . . . They believed . . . that the only substantial hope for universal

peace lay in the extension of this doctrine of brotherhood throughout the world. . . .

. . . These wise contributions of which I speak and many more were but principles of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which had been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . It was because of the pioneers' implicit faith in this transcendent message of life and truth that they established the Lord's house in "the top of the mountains" [Isaiah 2:2]. It was a great thing to set up a commonwealth and transform a desert into cities, towns, and villages with the homes, schools, and facilities we now enjoy. It was a vastly greater accomplishment to establish the kingdom of God and send forth from Zion that salutary message of hope and faith and divine, eternal wisdom to all mankind. This was the real heritage our noble pioneers brought with them and left to us and our friends. . . . It is the most precious gift in life. God help us to prize it, to live it, and to spread it. ■

Punctuation, spelling, and capitalization modernized.

