

PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.*First Counselor in the First Presidency*

President Grant wishes me to express his regrets that he felt it would be unwise in view of the long meeting tomorrow, for him to come out this evening. He wanted me to express to you his joy at the Conference thus far and to tell you that he looks forward to seeing you in the morning.

The congregation sang the hymn, "How Firm A Foundation," (Hymn Book, page 260).

Elder Joseph B. Harris, President of the San Juan Stake, offered the invocation.

The hymn, "O Ye Mountains High" (Hymn Book, page 376), was then sung by the congregation.

ELDER JOSEPH F. MERRILL*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

IN a very real sense, brethren, this is a remarkable gathering. There is assembled here what I think we in truth may say is the most favored group of men in all the world. In a body of this size no other similar assembly could be had anywhere on the face of the earth. There are here the leaders of the Church and of the stakes of the Church, God's Church. We all know that not one of us has a particle of doubt about that. Because we have been privileged to come to the positions that we occupy and to function therein, I think we are wonderfully favored of our Father in heaven.

Bishop Richards this afternoon spoke about the Aaronic Priesthood. If I may, I would like to speak a few minutes about the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is the Priesthood, of course, that, in a sense, makes the Church. To preside over, to guide and direct the Priesthood, is the chief responsibility of us who are assembled here; and particularly do the presidencies of stakes have the responsibility of presiding over and directing the labors of the Melchizedek Priesthood in their stakes.

It was nearly five years ago, in answer to a question, that President Grant reminded the Council of Twelve that they constitute the General Priesthood Board of the Church; and President Clawson, I remember, said President Smith gave the same answer once during his administration. The Council

of Twelve began to think, after that remark of President Grant's, a little more intently of their responsibility for the welfare of the Priesthood of the Church, particularly the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums thereof, and so they began to work. And there was announced, in the issue of *The Improvement Era* four years ago last December, what was, according to the headlines of the article, a new Priesthood plan. Well, there was nothing new in principle about it; however, its title was intriguing, and I presume that all in the stakes who had any responsibility for the Melchizedek Priesthood read the article.

Now, in response to a petition of the general Sunday school board, and in accordance with what had been the expressed wishes of some members of the Council of the Twelve the Priesthood classes, Melchizedek and Aaronic, were taken out of the Sunday schools. I think this was a good move. The Priesthood classes of the Church, particularly the Melchizedek Priesthood classes, had grown to believe that to be active in the Priesthood quorums was to attend the weekly or the monthly meetings of the quorum; and if that was done one was considered to be wholly active. We seemed to have forgotten the fact that in this Church we get joy through activity. When we attend our class, sit quietly, and listen to somebody conduct the lesson, then

get up and go away, the amount of activity in which we engage is extremely small.

In taking the classes of the Priesthood groups and quorums out of the Sunday school, it was not designed, at all, to say the class work was not important, but it was designed to emphasize another feature that had become more or less quiescent—the feature of activity; and so since that time the Council of Twelve, together with the other general Priesthood authorities of the Church, as they have gone out through the stakes, have been very insistent in urging the presidencies of stakes—because they are the responsible officers in the stakes—to look carefully to the supervision and guidance of the work of the Priesthood. No more responsible work, no greater obligation exists in the stakes than that of properly supervising the Priesthood quorums.

There has been a great deal of effort spent, in the last four years, in trying to improve the activity of Priesthood quorums, particularly of the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, but the progress has been rather slow. Though I think that if we compare the results today and judge our reports with the reports that were obtainable at that time, we will see that there has been improvement; and yet it is rather disappointing, when we come to realize what the Priesthood means and what it is, that improvement has not been more rapid.

Of course, we realize this fact, that all of this work is wholly voluntary. There is no such thing as force in the Church. There is no desire to use force, even if it could be used. It is love that is the dominating factor in the Church, and it is through love that we have been trying to get our brothers to feel, to a greater degree than they did in the past, their responsibilities as holders of the Priesthood. To be ordained to the Priesthood, in itself, may bring no blessing; it may bring condemnation. It gives an opportunity, a wonderful opportunity, in the light of the real truth in the circumstance, for personal growth and development.

So an individual who is privileged to receive the Priesthood has been honored with a very great opportunity.

Now, what we have been trying to do, brethren, as you know, is to emphasize the need of improving that opportunity, in order that we might live more acceptably to our Father in heaven. As a means of stimulating that activity, a committee was set up in every stake—the stake Melchizedek Priesthood committee—and it was advised that a member of the stake presidency should be chairman of that committee, the thought being to emphasize to the stake presidencies that it was their responsibility to supervise the work of the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums in their stakes.

The chief duty of that committee is to train the quorum officers in their duties and responsibilities, and so it was advised that a monthly meeting be held with all the Priesthood quorum officers and group leaders. A program for these meetings was discussed in several subsequent issues of *The Improvement Era*.

Well, brethren, progress has been made, we think, in an understanding by this stake committee of its responsibilities, and we believe those committees are growing in efficiency in discharging the responsibility of training the officers, but there is still much to be accomplished.

Now, may I say that, among other things, we instituted a quarterly report and asked that every quorum and every quorum group fill out a quarterly report form in triplicate, keep one and send two to the chairman of the stake committee, who keeps one and sends one on to the Melchizedek Priesthood committee of the Council of Twelve. Those reports have been coming in. They indicate, as I said a moment ago, some advancement and progress, but not as much as we hoped for. There are still some things that are lacking.

We know that a number of years ago there was advised to be set up in every quorum four standing committees. They were named. Their duties were specified. Generally the commit-

Saturday, April 4

First Day

tees were appointed, but even today some of them, according to reports, are not functioning well. Do we remember two things must be done if a standing committee continues to function well? Frequent assignments must be made and frequent reports required. Don't give a blanket assignment, turn the committee loose, and expect it to operate. Make those assignments frequently, and then ask for a report on every assignment. The report, of course, may be oral, it may be written, but a report should be required on every assignment. When the assignment is made, the assigning authority—of course that is the presidency of the quorum—should keep in touch with those who receive the assignment and see that they are functioning.

In the February number of *The Improvement Era* an article that was written by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith indicated in very clear terms what the duties of these committees are. But in order that these committees should function, and in order that the presidency of the quorum should feel it is their responsibility to see that they function, it was advised that the presidency of the quorum divide themselves among these committees, each one of the presidency being chairman of a committee. Now since there are four standing committees, the chairman of one of them will have to be chosen from the membership. The particular committees of which the presidents should be the chairmen were indicated in the article.

Well, brethren, I want to repeat that in order to get your committees at work and keep them at work, it is necessary to make frequent, specific assignments, and then to make a demand for reports on those assignments.

Now, there is another thing that we feel ought to be done, in order that the presidencies of quorums may meet their responsibilities to a greater degree than they did in the past. What do we advise? We advise that the presidencies of these quorums, who are held responsible for their quorums, should see that the requirements, as

indicated by the questions on the report forms, are definitely assigned, and that they are met. That is going to be some considerable responsibility. But in order that this may be done, we feel that the presidencies of quorums should meet more frequently than they have been doing—more frequently than once a month. No presidency of a stake can function unless they have regular weekly meetings. As a rule, no bishopric can function unless they have regular weekly meetings. We feel that presidencies of quorums should meet weekly, wherever it is feasible to do so, and that would be in the great majority of cases. Meet weekly. Let them meet with the idea of getting on their knees, brethren, and pray devotedly and wholeheartedly and honestly to the Lord for wisdom and guidance, and then get up and put their wits to work and try to plan how to make their assignments, how to meet their responsibilities, how to increase the activities of their committees and of their members.

IN every report there are some things even though the report, on the whole, is excellent—some things in which the quorum is weak. Do the presidency feel it is their responsibility to call attention to that, and to try to encourage their committees, to encourage their members, whoever have the responsibility of improving in the particular respects where weakness is indicated? Do they feel that they should keep near to them in that respect?

I want to call your attention to two or three activities, among others, that we have been very earnestly recommending and urging to be done.

You know since the beginning of our country's participation in war activities more and more of our brethren have been leaving home, entering defense industries, military forces, and so forth. We have been urging, in accordance with the recommendation that was made here by President Thomas E. McKay this morning, that every quorum feel that it is its responsibility to keep in close touch with absent brethren. A quorum is a group of

brethren bound together by love, by feelings of fraternity, and sympathy and fellowship and mutual interest. Does it not seem, from the standpoint of what is reasonable in the matter, that it is unthinkable that a member from a quorum can go away and be away for three months or longer, and the quorum make no effort whatsoever to get in touch with and hear from that absent member?

Now, it is recommended that he be written to at least monthly, wherever this is feasible. Certainly, brethren, all those that are away from the quorum, not only in the armed forces, but away from home in defense work anywhere, should be communicated with at least once a month. It should be somebody's business in the quorum to do this. Whether the president wants his welfare committee or others to have this special assignment is a matter that is apart from the fact that it ought to be somebody's business in behalf of the quorum, to write friendly, encouraging, helpful letters frequently to those that are away.

Now, our boys that are going into the armed forces meet tremendous difficulties and temptations and they need all the encouragement, all the help they can get. So we have asked—and I am going to ask now, brethren,—will you presidencies of stakes see that in your stake every quorum is instructed to keep in touch with these absentees?

Now, time admits only a reference to one thing more. It was five years ago this month that the Presidency of the Church wrote to the Council of the Twelve, they put it in writing—not by oral instruction only, but they put it in writing—and directed that there should be instituted in the Church a campaign for the non-use of liquor and tobacco. They directed it should be a Priesthood project. All quorums of the Priesthood, Melchizedek and Aaronic, should be held responsible for cleaning up their own membership from the use of these narcotics, liquor and tobacco. In the quorum quarterly report forms are questions relative to this liquor-tobacco campaign. Among

the questions are these: How many abstain from the use of liquor and tobacco? That number is very generally given. How many of the addicts are being labored with? The majority of the quorums in the Church today are saying: "None."

Now, brethren, I am speaking very plainly on the matter. It seems to me that it is unthinkable that an assignment to the Priesthood quorums direct from the First Presidency should go unheeded. I have never known of any project being assigned more directly than that. And yet some of the quorums are not doing anything, apparently, with their addict members. Oh, yes, they sponsor public lectures, perhaps have somebody come into the classes and talk, and so on. That isn't the way, brethren, the effective missionary work of this Church is carried on. That isn't the way the stake or foreign missionaries are mainly functioning. It is mainly by personal contact that missionaries work. That has been the method from the beginning that has won people.

The first phases of this campaign, may I say, were devoted to what we called the campaign of information. We have sent out more than a million pieces of literature, which have been spread all over the Church and very generally read, in all the Priesthood quorums.

Then we reached what President Clawson called the campaign of persuasion. "Know this, that every soul is free to choose his life and what he'll be. For this eternal truth is given, God will force no man to heaven. He'll call, persuade, direct aright, in numerous ways be good and kind, but never force the human mind."

The campaign of persuasion, brethren, uses the method of personal contact. Will you presidencies of stakes see that this direct assignment from the First Presidency is carried out in your stakes and that the method of personal contact is employed among the addicts? That is the most effective way. It is going to be by personal contacts that quorums can win their

Saturday, April 4

addicts to abstinence. Brethren, it can be done.

My observation and my testimony is that the Lord never required us to do anything that we cannot do with His help if we will exert ourselves. A wonderful testimony of that was given by our great President this morning, when he recited his first trip to the East to get some money. He was sent by proper authority and went in full confidence that the Lord was guiding him, and he relied upon the Lord and upon the promise that had been given him, and he succeeded marvelously well.

Yes, personal contact is the method and, wisely used, it can succeed. I refer you to a report that was published in the December number of *The Improvement Era* under the headline, "Ogden's Fine Work." The high priests quorum of Ogden Stake had

First Day

thirty-two addicts, nearly all of them elderly men. Most of them had been using tobacco all their lives. They haven't any more than a half dozen left today. They are working with them and are going to make that quorum one hundred percent total abstainers. Will you do the same in your stakes?

Now, brethren, there is a need for this. Our people are spending millions for liquor and tobacco and those things are faith-killing. If we want to develop faith, we need to get rid of those factors that handicap us in the exercise of faith. We must set the right example to you.

Keep your quorums active, brethren. That is the call of the hour. A number of ways of doing this have been indicated to you. The Lord bless you and help you to this end, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER CHARLES A. CALLIS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice, an humble and a contrite heart.

AMONG the cardinal virtues of the gospel is the praiseworthy virtue of humility. To a certain king of Israel, whose power was waning before the "pride that goeth before a fall," the prophet Samuel said: "When thou wert little in thine own sight, the Lord blessed thee." I interpret humility as being strength. Humility expresses itself in lowly service, in volunteering for any service which will ameliorate the conditions, particularly the spiritual conditions of mankind. Humility does not mean to grovel, to be a sycophant. Humility is inward strength outwardly expressed in good works. Great souls attain to humility.

The Apostle Peter said:

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh

about, seeking whom he may devour. . . . (I Peter 5:6-8)

Are the American people great enough to be humble? If this nation and all mankind had humbled themselves beneath the mighty hand of God, there would have been no war. Humility would have found beautiful expression in noble deeds.

Charles Evan Hughes gave this definition of Christian character: "Faith without credulity, conviction without bigotry, charity without condescension, courage without pugnacity, self-respect without vanity, humility without obsequiousness, love of humanity without sentimentality, and meekness with power." When Chief Justice Charles Evan Hughes retired from his exalted position, the Supreme Court was weakened, and this republic was made poorer.

Consider the example of Moses. He was the great lawgiver of Israel, filled with courage and faith. The miraculous, the statesmanlike work that he accomplished, the deeds that he performed, stamp him as the foremost statesman of any age of the world, ex-