

PRESIDENT DAVID O. McKAY*Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

When we realize that the twelve thousand or more members of the priesthood quorums assembled here tonight can say, each one in his own heart, "I know that my Redeemer lives," we can sense at least dimly the strength of this Church, for upon the priesthood rests the structure, the entire structure of the Church of Jesus Christ.

EVIDENCES OF PROGRESS

We have cause to be thankful that we have many evidences today of the marvelous growth of this work. In the mission fields, we have more missionaries than we have ever had before, nearly six thousand, not counting the missionaries in the stakes of Zion; tithing is greater than ever and increasing; baptisms in the field are greater; only within the last two weeks we had reports of a hundred and fifty baptisms in one mission in August; another, in the same month, two hundred and sixty-three, and these are converts, not children. The stakes and wards are increasing. More Church edifices are now under construction than we have ever had before in the history of the Church. All these are sure evidences of progress; and this attendance tonight is another,—one of the most encouraging. As President Smith has said, you are not here out of curiosity. You are not here because of any special attraction. You are here because you respect your calling. You honor your priesthood because of the sense of the responsibility that you carry. Each of you who holds the priesthood carries a certain amount of responsibility for the success of God's work. That realization, that willingness to respond to duty, has brought together tonight, on this September 30, 1950, the largest assembly of priesthood, I believe, ever held in the Church at a priesthood meeting.

The assembly of itself is an inspiration, especially when you contemplate its significance, and realize that in the brotherhood of Christ we are all one, supporting one another. It is sublime.

I pray for your sympathy, for your faith and prayers, and above all, for the inspiration of the Lord, that what I may say may be of worth, of interest, and contributive to the advancement of God's work.

NEED OF REVERENCE

I have, really, on my mind but one message. I am going to say one appeal for this vast audience of leaders. I believe there is one great need in the Church which you presidencies of stakes, bishoprics of wards, presidencies of quorums, and officers in auxiliaries, can supply. I have in mind the need of more reverence in our houses of worship, better order and discipline in our classrooms, in quorum meetings and in auxiliary groups.

The more we try to cultivate the attributes of the Savior, the stronger we become in character and in spirituality, and those are the two great purposes of life, so to live that we may be susceptible to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and to his guidance.

OVERCOME EVIL TENDENCIES

I do not know who it was who wrote many years ago that the whole purpose of life might be summed up in these words: "To subdue matter that we might realize the ideal."

When I first read that I thought I could paraphrase it and say, "The whole purpose of life is to bring under subjection the animal passions, proclivities and tendencies, that we might realize the companionship, always, of God's Holy Spirit." I think that is the ideal. One chief purpose of life is to overcome evil tendencies, to govern our appetites, to control our passions,—anger, hatred, jealousy, immorality. We have to overcome them; we have to subject them, conquer them, because God has said: "My spirit will not dwell in unclean tabernacles, nor will it always strive with man."

A DIVINE ATTRIBUTE

The principle of self-control lies at the basis of reverence and good order in classrooms. I do not know how to define reverence, but I do know how to classify or to place it as one of the objectives of nobility, indeed, one of the attributes of deity.

Love is the divinest attribute of the human soul. I am not so sure but sympathy is next to it,—sympathy for the afflicted, for suffering animals, for our brethren and sisters. That is a God-like virtue.

Kindness is also a sublime virtue. The first sentence in what is now known as the Psalm of Love is this: "Love suffereth long and is kind."

However, in my thought tonight, I am prompted to place reverence next to Love. Jesus mentioned it first in the Lord's prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name . . ." *Hallow*—to make holy—to hold in reverence.

When Jesus cleansed the temple, he was filled with reverent indignation because men were desecrating his Father's house, selling doves and lambs to be offered as sacrifice. Money changers were there for the convenience of those who came from other countries, so they could give in local currency their temple contributions. Seemingly, in their own eyes, they were justified, but they were doing these things in the House of God. We are told that he overturned the money changers' tables, and said to the sellers of doves, "Take these things hence. Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise."

REVERENCE DEFINED

"Reverence," wrote Ruskin, "is the noblest state in which a man

can live in the world. Reverence is one of the signs of strength; irreverence one of the surest indications of weakness. No man will rise high who jeers at sacred things. The fine loyalties of life must be revered or they will be foresworn in the day of trial."

Charles Jefferson, the author of "The Character of Jesus" writes: "Men in many circles are clever, interesting, brilliant, but they lack one of the three dimensions of life. They have no reach upward. Their conversation sparkles, but it is frivolous and often flippant. Their talk is witty, but the wit is often at the expense of high and sacred things."

You can tell a true soul of wit by the things of which he makes light. The best humorous writers avoid making light of religion, or of sacred things.

Jefferson continues: "One finds this lack of reverence even in the church. In every community there are those who treat the House of God as they treat a streetcar, entering it and leaving it when they please. Even habitual church attendants often surprise and shock one by their irreverent behavior in the House of Prayer. Those persons are not ignoramuses or barbarians; they are simply undeveloped in the virtue of reverence."

ORDER IN CLASSROOMS

Our classrooms are sometimes places of boisterousness. Here is where we need good teachers. A teacher who can present a lesson interestingly will have good order, and when he or she finds students who are rebellious, flipping papers, paying no attention, stumbling, kicking one another, he or she may know that the lesson is not being properly presented. Perhaps it was not even properly prepared.

One of our mothers recently went to a Sunday School class to try to find out why her son was losing interest. There was so much boisterousness, so much confusion, so much noise, that she felt heart-sick; and as she arose to leave she said to the teacher: "I thought this was a Sunday School class, not bedlam!"

SELF-CONTROL EXEMPLIFIED

I have said something about self-control, self-mastery, as being one of the fundamental purposes of life. You see it exemplified in the life of the Savior, on the Mount of Temptation, when he resisted the tempter, who said: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread,"—an appeal to his appetite. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

"If thou be the Son of God," again strong in his taunting, "Cast thyself down; for it is written"—he quotes scripture—"He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

"It is written," said the Savior, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

In the next temptation Satan is not taunting, but pleading. "All these things will I give thee," showing him the kingdoms of the world, "if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

That is a lesson of life. The tempter was foiled, taunting at first, strong in his assurance that he could tempt, but at last pleading, and finally banished. "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." And angels came and administered to him.

Now then, there is a lesson of life to us all. Satan tauntingly tempts us, and unless we resist and have in mind a higher goal than the mere indulgence or gratification of the physical, we are going to weaken, and the tempter will gain in strength.

TO BEGIN IN CHILDHOOD

The lesson of self-control should begin in childhood, in the home. Little children should have a sense of freedom to do as they wish up to a certain point. Beyond that point they cannot go, and that is when that freedom interferes with the rights, comfort or convenience of another member of the family.

I have told before about an incident that occurred in a zoo. It is simple, and some probably may think we should not go to the monkeys for lessons. I think they can teach us some. Sister McKay and I stood one day, I believe it was at San Diego, watching a mother monkey with a new born babe. She was guarding it, her quick eye watching the other monkeys in the cage; but the little babe was free to do just as it pleased, hopping around, weak in its infancy, getting hold of the bars, starting to climb. When it would reach a certain place, the mother would reach up and bring it back. When it got into a danger point, that mother instinctively guarded it and said, "Back this way." And then the babe was free again, but only within certain limits.

I said to Sister McKay, "There is a lesson of life in guiding children."

RIGHTS OF OTHERS

In the classrooms children should be taught, should be free to discuss, free to speak, free to participate in classwork, but no member of the class has the right to distract another student by jostling or making light and frivolous remarks. And I think in this Church, in the priesthood quorums and classes and in auxiliaries, teachers and superintendents ought not to permit it. Disorder injures the child who makes it. He should learn that when he is in society there are certain things which he cannot do with impunity. He cannot trespass upon the rights of his associates.

Let children learn this lesson in youth because when they get

out in society and try to trespass against the law, they will feel the restraining hand and probably suffer punishment.

Good order in the classroom is essential to instill into the hearts and lives of young men and young women the principle of self-control. They want to talk and they want to whisper, but they cannot do it because it will disturb somebody else. Learn the power and lesson of self-mastery.

Reverence should be particularly manifest in sacrament meeting, in quorum meetings, in Sunday School, in M.I.A., in Primary, yes, and in Relief Society. This is a missionary Church. People come here for light and knowledge, for instruction, and they have a right to find it when they come.

EXTRACT FROM LETTER

The following extract from a letter that came to the First Presidency last week will illustrate my point:

"About one month ago two of your missionaries came to my door with a Book of Mormon. Since I am a Catholic, and a Catholic writer for our press, and since I am fully acquainted with Catholic doctrine and our Holy Bible, I at first refused the offer of the Book of Mormon. They, however, persisted, and as I have permission to read other books, it being given me by my pastor since I am a writer, I finally took the book. Of course you might well guess what happened. Having been trained during my sixteen years as a Catholic to recognize the truth when I see, hear or read it, I could not very well fail to recognize also that the Book of Mormon is true. This was even more the case when they later brought what might be termed its companion book, The Doctrine and Covenants.

"Surely this is not the kindly, gentle Jesus, as most Catholics are taught to know him, but just as surely in the Doctrine and Covenants this is the voice of Jesus as he spoke to the Apostles, the Pharisees and scribes, and all the people during his three years of public ministry on earth. Consequently, I began taking instructions, and your missionaries came twice a week to hold cottage meetings.

"Then I was taken to some Church meetings over in Rodeo, three miles from here, and I must admit that each time I have returned home broken-hearted and mourning to myself, 'Oh, poor Jesus, surely you have made the most miserable failure in your life in trying to establish your Church anew with these people.'

"During the distribution of the bread and water I can discern no spirit of prayer or prayerful reception among the congregation. They are just as liable to be smiling and whispering together as not, scarcely discerning the body of the Lord."

"Your own defects to know,
Make use of every friend and every foe."

IRREVERENCE IN SERVICES

On September 13 there came to my desk this letter from one of our stake workers:

"I refer to pronounced irreverence in our church services, with the noise, laughter and confusion that often accompanies such a condition. This is responsible for considerable criticism and dissatisfaction and results in absenting many members from the meetings. Our home, stake missionaries, are seriously handicapped in their work as many fear to bring investigators to our meetings while this condition of irreverence prevails.

"The trouble is often intensified by reason of frivolous remarks by speakers on the stand, and outbursts of laughter from the audience, in which the children feel free to participate. This is a sad admission in connection with the true Church of Jesus Christ.

"Irreverence in God's house is not conducive to the best interests of the sacrament administration and God must be displeased with the insincerity of his children who partake of the sacred emblems carelessly, devoid of reverence that should characterize true worship."

IMPROVEMENT NOTED

I should like to say here that my observation leads me to believe that we have made a wonderful step in that. I have not been in a house of worship, either in Sunday School or in sacrament meeting, where the order during the administering of the sacrament has not been just as perfect as it is at this moment in this building. A baby's voice, perhaps, somewhere, but God is not displeased with a baby's voice, when the parents and others are reverently thinking of the covenants they are making. However, the writer of this letter seems to have had a different experience.

I plead with you to develop this Christ-like attribute of reverence in our houses of worship and better discipline in our classrooms. And I believe that you brethren can lead in it.

ELDERS' EXAMPLE FOLLOWED

I remember in 1923, attending a conference at Burnley, Liverpool Conference. Brothers and sisters came from various parts of the district, and happy to see one another as you missionaries know they are, shaking hands, members of the Church happy to see the elders, shaking hands with them, and the elders joining in social greetings.

The meeting was held on the third floor of a public hall. In the adjoining room the sisters were preparing the lunch. We could hear the rattle of tin pans and of other receptacles. Ten o'clock came and there was still noise. It was fully five minutes before there was order.

Six months from that time when we held a meeting with the elders in that district, prior to the opening of the conference, we said: "Brethren, the Lord is not displeased with our greetings, expressions of love and brotherhood, but he is displeased with the irreverent

attitude, and we have some choice people, strangers who are not used to this free intercourse of greetings so characteristic of Latter-day Saint meetings. So tomorrow morning, after you have greeted your friends from various places, without any announcement, at seven minutes to ten o'clock, you quietly take your seats. Do not say a word. You just go to your assigned places."

They did so and at four minutes to ten o'clock every member of that district in attendance at the conference, following the example of the missionaries, was in his or her seat, and there was order even before the hour of opening arrived.

REVERENCE ENJOINED

It is said that "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there will I be to bless them," and I tell you when he is present we should be reverent.

Someone said if Shakespeare were to enter this hall tonight, we should all stand up to greet him, but if Christ entered, we should fall on our knees and worship him.

God bless you, brethren, as leaders in Israel, as guides to youth, to increase your influence with those among whom you labor. The Lord help us to sanctify our houses of worship, that our chapels may be indeed sacred places in which we meet to worship God, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Male Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir and the Congregation joined in singing the hymn, "Redeemer of Israel."

PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.

First Counselor in the First Presidency

My brethren, again I sense that this is a great privilege to stand before you for a few minutes, and to say something to you that I hope may be helpful. Before I finish I shall want to return to my solo on the G string, "Unity," but I want to say a little something beforehand, and I trust the Lord will be with me that what I say may be in harmony with what He would have said.

THE PRIESTHOOD

The question of the priesthood has always been to me an alluring question, and not only alluring, but more or less elusive. We use the word priesthood apparently in at least two, if not three, senses. We use it sometimes to mean the power of the priesthood. I suppose in fact the priesthood is power. We use it sometimes to indicate the organization through which the priesthood operates, and we use it sometimes, apparently, to indicate the service which the priesthood is to render.