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First Counselor in the First Presidency



AM DEEPLY grateful to be associated with you, my dear brethren and sisters, in this great conference of the Church. In your presence I give thanks for the blessings of health and strength sufficient to enable me to participate in the cause so dear to our hearts. I thank God for the testimony and conviction which has come to me in my youth, and grown throughout the years, that he lives, that he is the Organizer and Ruler of the universe, that his Son is our Redeemer and Savior and the Lord of this earth, and that his gospel, planned in the beginning to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man, has been authentically restored to the earth in its fulness, after a long period of time during which its spirit and power were lost to God's children.

So grateful I am for these transcendent blessings which have come into my own life that years ago I resolved that with the Lord's help and the limited powers at my disposal I would do what I could to extend these benefactions to my fellow men, my brethren and sisters in the family of the Lord. With such a purpose in mind, I have selected a text today, which after the most inspiring addresses which have taken place not only at this session but also at the Church of the Air session, I would think to be substantially unnecessary, and yet which I fear in the interest of some at least, may with propriety be called to your attention. I have in mind the preface to the famous definition of the gospel which Paul gave to us years and years ago, in the following well-known words: ". . . I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." (Romans 1:16.) I am induced to dwell upon these words through the observations which I have made for many years pertinent to the conduct of men and women both within and without the Church. I have remarked on previous occasions that Paul

must have been inspired, as he gave his definition of the gospel, to look down through the ages of men and with prophetic vision fathom the reasoning, the philosophies, and the dispositions of men of all ages. Not only was his preface justified on the premise of vision and understanding, but it also conformed to the words of the Master himself, when, at the conclusion of his sermon after feeding the multitude, he uttered these portentous words: "Who-soever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38.)

Why should men be ashamed of the gospel of Christ? It is conceivable that many may not be converted and have faith sufficient to accept the divinity of the Lord Jesus and the efficacy of his gospel, but having once had assurance of his reality and the blessings which flow therefrom, why are they so hesitant in the acknowledgment of his goodness and merciful consideration for them? I don't know that I am competent to point out the psychological basis for this state of mind, but I doubt that a psychologist is needed to understand some of the factors that contribute to it.

Undoubtedly one of the factors is pride; I think a false pride, which induces a sense of fear, nearly always without justification, that a confession of religious faith will make for loss of prestige and standing among a certain class of associates. There is sometimes fear that ridicule will follow such an acknowledgment, and of course no one likes to be ridiculed because that is great injury to pride and self-esteem and hard to take.

There are some who may regard the acknowledgment of spiritual power as a stigma of weakness, that the humility which is essential to the acceptance of divine power is incompatible with

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strength of manhood and self-determination. That was in large measure the doctrine of Hitler and is today the philosophy of Communism. I hope there are not many who adopt such a philosophy of life.

There are some who seem to feel that their liberties are circumscribed by the acceptance and acknowledgment of spiritual forces and that they are much freer and better off to make no profession of faith whatever. Considered in the light of a deterrent to wrongdoing, perhaps they are right, but such a concept is really an abandonment of the underlying principles of righteousness and good character.

Then there are those, constituting perhaps the largest portion of that group within the Church who seem ashamed of the gospel of Christ, who are just too weak to stand up under all circumstances and conditions for the right and the truth as they know it to be. Some of these are our so-called intellectuals, who persuade themselves that they suffer something of a loss of caste in the sophisticated world in which they move by plain, unequivocal acknowledgment of the Lord's supremacy and our dependence on him. How they come to persuade themselves that a lesser order of intelligence is required to comprehend and acquire the eternal and transcendently beautiful and vital truths and concepts of life, human behavior and destiny coming through revelation, than the findings of science, I do not understand. Both are important, all a part of God's wise provision for humanity. Why disparage either?

There is one type of thinking with which I have some sympathy, and that is for the man who is hesitant to make professions who has not acquired the strength to live up to them. He falls, however, not so much in the category of those ashamed of the gospel as of those who have not had sufficient conviction of the truth to bring to them mastery of themselves and their habits.

Now while I may not have pointed out all of the factors and circumstances which give rise to this state of being

ashamed of the gospel, I should like to pass to the more important and positive aspects of my theme by asking the comprehensive question, "What is there about the gospel of Christ to be ashamed of?"

The gospel of Christ is revelation. The Savior himself was a revelation, coming to earth to reveal to men in the flesh the Father, his personality and his attributes. Christ himself was in no sense an outgrowth of his times and environment. He came in shocking contrast to the philosophies and practices prevailing at the time, as is being pointed out so impressively by our current speaker [Hugh Nibley] on the Sunday evening radio hour of the Church. The gospel was restored in the latter days through revelation. Few people acquainted with the life and history of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the circumstances under which the restoration took place, will honestly contend that the great work he initiated could have come about on his own initiative and personal capabilities. Revelation is the foundation of the gospel of Christ. Why be ashamed of it? Would it make anybody happier to ascribe the origin of the gospel to the rationalizing of men? Such a position would surely rob it of its authority and vitality. Why should any Christian wish to do that? He may not be a Christian. That is within his right of election, but if he is a Christian, how can he be ashamed of revelation?

Priesthood is an essential component of the gospel plan. Why should men be ashamed of the priesthood? In granting the priesthood to man, the Lord has dignified and honored him as perhaps he could have done in no other way. The priesthood is the power by which the worlds were created, and is ". . . without beginning of days or end of years." (Alma 13:7.) It is the specific delegation of the authority of the Lord to administer the ordinances of the holy gospel, and it is the requisite investiture of a man to receive his highest reward in the life to come. It is the kindest, most charitable, most consider-

ate and merciful power and authority ever described in all literature. It tempers and sweetens the life of him who holds it and blesses the lives of those to whom he ministers. It is the perfect plan of service to humankind because within its province come the greatest of all blessings to man and woman. Why should any man be ashamed of this precious endowment? If he had a commission from political authority, he would probably boast of it. I speak to my own brethren when I ask them how they justify themselves in speaking lightly of this sacred and divine blessing which has come into their lives. There are men, I know, and I hope I won't offend by mentioning them as a class, who have flippantly joked about the priesthood most of their lives. Some of these men, like myself, are reaching an age where life's expectancy is not too long. Out of my friendship for them, I ask them to repent before it is too late.

I mention next the wisdom which the gospel of Christ brings to us about the human body, its status and its care. We are indebted to science, and the great men of research, for the development of much knowledge concerning the human body. I pay sincere tribute to those who have contributed so much to our health, our comfort, and our longevity. I believe that there will be unfolded to these devoted men of science many more of nature's secrets to combat dread diseases, to free men for a larger measure of usefulness in the world. But science has not discovered the secret of life itself, its beginnings and its purposes. The gospel of Christ has disclosed that information. It has told us in plainness of our beginnings as spirit children of the Father, of our coming to earth to take on mortal bodies, of our probation here, and our destiny, if we so elect, to win high places on our return to the Father in the eternities to come. Our bodies, thus housing the eternal spirit, take on a glorified spiritual concept which science cannot give them. Out of that concept we come to know that we cannot dese-

crate the body with impunity, and without offering affront to him who made provision for us to have it. It follows that we cannot take poisons into it, or otherwise abuse it, without injury to our own self-respect and without great ingratitude. What an incentive to health and cleanliness of life this lofty concept is! In their major aspects the demonstrations of science in the last hundred years have tended to confirm the wisdom of the Word of Wisdom, a product of the gospel of Christ. Where is the thoughtful man or woman who is ashamed of this exalted concept of the human body?

In the society of men it is pretty generally acknowledged that there is no greater establishment than that of the home. Families are the component units in communities and nations, and thoughtful people the world over assert that if all could be right with the homes of the people, the progress of civilization would be assured. Next to its witness for the supremacy of one God and the coming forth of his Son, perhaps the greatest contribution emanating from the holy Bible is its historical and doctrinal support for the unity of the family in the patriarchal order. From the beginning man and woman were to cleave together. Marriage has been ordained of God, and sons and daughters commanded to honor their fathers and their mothers. All of the earlier pronouncements concerning marriage and family ties set forth in the ancient scriptures were adopted by and incorporated into the gospel of Christ. Revelations given with the restoration of the gospel in the latter days have expanded man's understanding of this all-important relationship. The wedlock of a man and woman has been given a significance never before mentioned in all Christian literature, although undoubtedly wished for and hoped for by countless thousands who passed away before the new revelation came. I say wished for and hoped for because I feel sure that Christian men and women of firm faith in immortality have always longed and prayed for the

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reunion of their families in the hereafter. Well, that assurance came with the restored gospel of Christ and the authority of the Holy Priesthood, under whose power men and women were no more united in marriage until "death doth them part," but they were sealed together with bonds that persist in holy matrimony for time and for all eternity, and into the marriage covenant so established came their children to belong to them forever and forever. What a satisfaction to the true lover of home and family! What a consolation in times of sad earthly partings! What a hope and faith to live for!

I wish that all loving husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, who have lived in the past and who live at present, could enjoy the peace, satisfaction, and encouragement that this great doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ brings. How can one be ashamed of this exalting principle of life and salvation? Is one ashamed of it when he or she prefers a wedding in a church with elaborate, costly, and showy pageantry designed for social prestige, to the simple, quiet, sequestered, meaningful, sacred service performed in the temple of God? Is she ashamed of the gospel of Christ when she declines to yield to the requirements of modesty and appropriateness in dress for the sacred temple ceremonies? Is he ashamed of the gospel when he cannot muster the courage and strength to forsake a personal habit incompatible with the life which is contemplated for the participants in the holy order of matrimony? O my young friends, who contemplate selecting partners for life, I entreat you, be not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Avail yourselves of the great and beautiful privileges it offers to you. If you do, a rich happiness will come into your lives that will far exceed any slight deprivation you may think you suffer in obtaining the promised blessings.

We live in a world where good men pray for brotherhood and peace. I am sure that to many their prayers seem in vain. So many years have passed since

there was a measure of good feeling among nations that we have mostly forgotten that it ever existed and despair that it ever may be. Only the Lord knows what the future holds in store. We as a people are resigned to the acceptance of his will and purposes. I think, however, it is not displeasing to him for us to pray and hope for peace, and certainly it is not out of order for his Church to endeavor to lay the foundations for peace. It has been made known to us through revelation that a lasting peace can come only through righteousness and brotherhood. So long as the adversary of light and truth is able to lead his followers in rebellion against God and the gospel of Christ, so long will there be conflict in the world.

I am not one who believes that that conflict will never cease, for I have faith in the triumph of truth and of God's plans. His eternal plans are laid out for us in the gospel of Christ, and however much stress statesmen and men of the world lay on other formulas, true Christians know that conformity to the plans of the gospel alone will bring enduring peace. The gospel provides us with full understanding of all the requisites. It tells us that first there must be recognition of the supremacy of and love of God the Father, and secondly, that man recognizing himself as a son of God must love his fellow man. These are the basic requirements, but we are given innumerable instructions as to how to implement them.

His Church has been set up in the earth as a tangible institution to foster and encompass the divinely appointed society in which men may live. This government is under the jurisdiction of appointed servants in the Holy Priesthood, who are authorized to give counsel and make decisions in the operation of the Church. The society itself is founded upon the fundamental principle and assumption that individual salvation here and hereafter is acquired through our Savior by individual good living in compliance with the laws and ordinances of the gospel. The

over-all function of the Church is to bless its members and all of God's children. All of its purposes are altruistic and Christlike. It constitutes his kingdom set up in the earth to fulfil the high destiny he has set for it. All of its agencies strive through devoted leadership and faithful members to reach these great ends.

It endeavors to create a brotherhood among men in fraternities of the priesthood who exemplify the oneness for which he prayed with his own disciples before his departure. This fraternity sufficiently extended in the world will bring peace. To bring peace to the human soul and all mankind is a major objective of the gospel of Christ. Who is ashamed of this noble aspiration? Who is ashamed to be identified with such a lofty cause? I wish I could answer: Few Christians and none within the Church of Jesus Christ. I am afraid that answer would not be accurate, but I express the earnest hope that as the years go by and the designs and purposes of the Lord become more apparent, the number of those who are ashamed of the gospel of Christ will rapidly diminish. I take the liberty of holding out a promise to Christian men everywhere and to their wives and children: If you will develop within yourselves a deeper appreciation for the benefactions coming into your lives through the ministry and gospel of our Lord, and if you will more freely acknowledge in the presence of all men his divine Lordship of the earth, a measure of peace and happiness will come into your hearts and souls which will enrich your lives, and the lives of countless others, and God will bless you and make you happy.

Then too, my brethren and sisters in the Church and kingdom of our Lord, I make this solemn declaration: If you are never ashamed of the gospel of Christ, if you will always pray to him and never defame his sacred name, if you will never make light of the Holy Priesthood and the ceremonies and ordinances of the gospel, a spirit of rebellion will never come into your hearts.

Your confidence in the leadership of the Church will grow and increase. Your relationships with your brethren and sisters will become more tender and sweet. You will grow in faith and in good works, and when your life's mission has been completed and you go hence to your reward, the Savior will greet you, as he has promised, with those glorious words, "I am not ashamed of you."

May that be our lot, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

President Stephen L Richards of the First Presidency of the Church has just concluded speaking. To the listening audience, I believe I neglected to tell you that the speaker who preceded the congregational singing was Elder Hugh B. Brown, member of the Assistants to the Council of the Twelve.

These conferences furnish us the opportunity to say thank you to the Tabernacle Choir and the members thereof, to the Chorister and Organists, and the Officers. Their devotion is commendable. They have been here since seven as you know, continuing week after week, and month after month, rendering service. So this is an opportunity, brothers and sisters, to say thank you. We do appreciate what you are doing.

We wish to express appreciation also to the Berkeley Stake for these beautiful calla lillies, which adorn the rostrum, and appreciation to the Tacoma Stake for 3,000 daffodils, contributed by the Puyallup Valley Daffodil Festival Committee for the beautification of this building during Conference.

We express appreciation to the city officials for their efficient care in directing traffic this morning. You all have noticed how efficiently they are handling that, and we wish them to know that we appreciate their cooperation,—the mayor, city council, and all who are contributing to the safety of the great congregations assembled, and that we may sense perhaps more definitely the size of the congregation