

**President David O. McKay:**

We have just listened to the Patriarch to the Church, Elder Eldred G. Smith.

The congregation will now rise and sing "Praise to the Man Who Com-

muned With Jehovah." After the singing Elder Sterling W. Sill will speak to us.

Singing by the Choir and congregation, "Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah."

**ELDER STERLING W. SILL**

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**I**N FOUR days it will be six months since President McKay invited me to his office to notify me that I had been called to this position. These six months have been tremendous months to me. While I have always been active in Church work, it has mostly been in some ward or stake capacity, and sometimes our appreciation is restricted by our experience. But during these last six months I have had the new experience of visiting many stakes of the Church, located in six states and one foreign country. In each case I have not been in that stake more than a few hours before I have felt almost as much at home as though I had lived there all of my life, and I have been delighted and inspired to find that all over the Church there is the same fervent testimony of the gospel, and the same devotion to God that has characterized the great men and women of my own ward and stake, to whom I owe such a great debt of gratitude.

This has been a profitable experience to me for many other reasons. One is that I have become a little better acquainted with the men who lead the Church, not only because of more frequent personal contact, but also on the day of my appointment I made a resolution that I would read from beginning to end every book that had been written by every present General Authority of the Church in order that I might learn something from his devotion and faith. I have not finished this project yet, but I have made substantial progress in that direction, and I have been delighted at the great stimulation and inspiration that I have received. I found out a long time ago, that we may not only be inspired by our Father in heaven, but we may also receive inspiration from his children.

This particular reading comes as a sort of climax to a great experience that began for me ten years ago when I heard Adam S. Bennion give a lecture on the value of great literature. It was near the end of the Japanese war and he presented this proposition: Suppose that you were going to be a prisoner in a Japanese concentration camp for the next four years, and that you would be permitted to take with you the works of any ten authors. Which would you take, and what would you expect to get from your study? That is, what are the values in great literature—in great human thought? Brother Bennion's idea was that one might select the ten authors in the world in whom he had the greatest interest and confidence, the men that he would like most to resemble, and then read everything that they had ever written, and one by one try to exhaust each in turn; that is, you think his every thought. You try to feel as he felt. You may probe and pry and peep into every corner of his mind. You try to live his life over again.

Following this suggestion has been a wonderful experience to me, and presently I am re-reading one of my ten authors. This particular author has written five books. One of them is entitled the Old Testament. Another is the New Testament. One is the Book of Mormon. One is the Doctrine and Covenants and one is the Pearl of Great Price. Each time we read a book with a new purpose it becomes a new book. This is not because the words in the book have changed, but because we bring to it a new outlook; for example, one might read the Bible to get from it its literature, or its history, or its philosophy, or its psychology, or its theology, but I am not re-reading the standard works of the Church primar-

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ily for any of these reasons. Rather, I am trying to get better acquainted with the author.

Daniel Twohig wrote a sacred song entitled, "I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked," and I have no doubt that that would be a thrilling experience, to stand on the very spot of ground on which Jesus once stood, but we may have an experience which is far more important. For through the scriptures we can think, today, what Jesus thought. We can try to feel as he felt. We can try to do as he did. We may try to become what he is.

Someone has asked this question: How would you like to create your own mind? But isn't that about what we are all doing? William James said ". . . the mind is made up by what it feeds upon." Someone else has said, ". . . the mind, like the dyer's hand, is colored by what it holds." That is, if I hold in my hand a sponge full of purple dye, my hand becomes purple, and when we hold in our minds and hearts the thoughts of God, ideas having to do with great spirituality and devotion and faith, then our lives are made up accordingly, for as the writer of the Proverbs said, ". . . As he [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7.)

I am very grateful for these wonderful books which we call the standard works of the Church, because through them we may think even the thoughts of God as the prophets have recorded them through all the ages of the world. The Old Testament was written in the period antedating the mortality of Jesus. The New Testament is written about his earth life. The Doctrine and Covenants was written in our own day. And the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price reach across all three of these periods.

But, in addition to the standard works, I am very grateful for the recorded ideas of those who presently and in the past have led the Church. Because they have written their ideas down, we can think their thoughts. I hope I do not embarrass President Joseph Fielding Smith by speaking about his recent great book entitled *Man—His Origin and Destiny*, which I think is one of the

great books of the Church. I would like to see every person in the world read this great book, for what knowledge could be more important and helpful to man than the ideas therein presented. President Smith has packed into this book the study, meditation, and devotion of a lifetime, but through our reading we may make all of these ideas our own in a week or a month. This is one of the advantages of a great book.

To try to indicate the need that exists in the world, and in our own lives, for proper religious information, I would like to tell you of an experience that I had a few weeks before I read Brother Smith's book. I happened to be in a large eastern city on a business assignment and, inasmuch as I was in the city over Sunday and was not convenient to my own Church, I went to hear one of the great Protestant ministers of the world. After the meeting was over, I was shown through their great church edifice, and I bought a book written by the minister, which I read very carefully on the train coming home. Three weeks later I was again in this city and again went to hear this man speak. After the service was over a large group of people lined up to shake hands with the speaker. After all of the others had gone, I introduced myself and told him how much I had enjoyed his sermons and his book, but there were some things that I could not understand and I would appreciate it if he would discuss some of them with me. He had used some phrases in reference to God such as "immerse yourself in God," or "send your roots down into God," or "fill your mind with God," and I asked him if he would explain to me his conception of God. He was very frank to say, "I do not know what God is, and I do not know of anyone who does know. If someone could find out what God is, that would be the greatest news that had ever come into the world." I said to him, "Would you give me your idea of what is meant by the statement in Genesis (1:27) which says that 'God created man in his own image?'" He said, "There is one thing of which I am reasonably sure, and that is that

God is not an anthropomorphic God; that man was not created in the image of God."

This great man, who is one of the most popular religious leaders in the world, does not understand God, and yet Jesus said, "... this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) In addition to this, this man who has taken upon himself to minister in the name of Christ does not understand pre-existence or the resurrection. He does not know the difference between the Aaronic and the Melchizedek Priesthood, nor does he understand the organization of the Church, or the use of temples, or salvation for the dead. He does not understand the necessity for divine authority, and a great many other simple doctrines of Jesus that are plainly mentioned and discussed in the scriptures. Yet this man is the spiritual director of thousands of people.

I was greatly impressed by the earnestness of his declaration that to know God would be the greatest information that could ever come into the world. When I returned home, I decided to find out what were the important events that were happening in the world today so that I could make a comparison. I called up a newspaperman and asked him if he would let me know what were the greatest news events of the last year. He listed the following:

Stalin's death in March 1953.

The execution of the Rosenbergs in June 1953.

The Greenlease kidnaping last fall.

The Harry Dexter White case last fall.

The East German food riots in early 1954.

The hydrogen bomb.

The launching of the atomic submarine, *Nautilus*, in January 1954.

The Puerto Ricans who shot up Congress in March 1954.

The polio vaccination test, 1954.

The Army-McCarthy hearings, 1954.

Most of these events have to do with bringing death into the world, whereas to know God could bring eternal life to all men. With this in mind, I opened the Doctrine and Covenants and re-read with a new appreciation the account of this greatest event that has happened upon this earth since the days that Jesus lived upon it. This wonderful event is recorded so that everyone may read and understand. We declare to the world that in the spring of 1820, God the Father and his son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith, to re-establish upon the earth a belief in the God of Genesis, and to restore in its fulness the knowledge of all of the principles of the gospel. To discover God is the greatest discovery that anyone ever makes in his lifetime, and in trying to understand the great responsibility that goes with such a discovery, I got down on my knees and asked God to help me bear an acceptable witness of him to all of those with whom I should come in contact. When it was revealed to Paul as he journeyed on the way to Damascus that Jesus was the Christ, a great responsibility was placed upon him. When the same thing was made known to Joseph Smith, a tremendous responsibility was placed upon him. He said, "... I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it." (P. of G. P. Joseph Smith 2:25.) Now that the same thing has been made known to us, a great responsibility has been placed upon us, and I pray that our heavenly Father will help us to be effective, inspired, untiring bearers of this great truth to all men everywhere in the world. This prayer I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### President David O. McKay:

Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve, has just concluded speaking. We shall now hear Elder John Longden, also an Assistant to the Twelve. Brother Longden will be followed by Elder Henry D. Moyle.