

AN ADDRESS
TO THE PRIESTHOOD

By FREDERICK M. SMITH

at the

Logan, Iowa, Reunion, September, 1916

(A reprint from the *Saints' Herald* of November 28, 1917.)

For the Priesthood
of the
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter Day Saints

PUBLISHED BY
HERALD PUBLISHING HOUSE
LAMONI, IOWA

TO THE PRIESTHOOD:

In addressing a word to the priesthood and the membership I hope I shall be able to arouse a keener appreciation of the sacredness of our work and stimulate to larger activity. As a people we have long been talking about, and singing about, and looking forward to a consummation of what we have termed a marvelous work and a wonder. We have sung of the time when the Lord will accomplish this marvelous work. We have looked forward to the establishment of what we term Zion, and the instituting of what we call Zionite conditions, and I fear that we have been far too content to allow the Lord to do the work, rather than to be willing to do our part of it.

It requires on the part of the people a consistent, constant, and active faith in order for the Lord to accomplish that work, and it will not be accomplished until the Lord has developed a people, which he says must be a tried people. And he points out the fact that we must pass through a period of preparation, perhaps of long duration, that shall eventually bring us up to a plane where the Lord can use us in a way that he never has been able to use us in the past. In other words, the Lord will not do this work alone; we must do our part; we must constitute ourselves as workers together with God for the accomplishment of this purpose.

It is a well-known fact that when old habits are broken up before new habits are formed there is a period of confusion, in which there is an effort on the part of the individual to adapt himself to the changed conditions. And frequently this period of

confusion is accompanied by considerable distress, depression, or uncertainty, and is potential with danger. That has been demonstrated in the life of almost every individual. When a child has been cultured and nurtured in the faith of the church, has been taught it at his mother's knee, there has developed in him a simple, unquestioning faith in God; faith so pure, so simple, and so sublime, that when any little trouble comes he feels that he will be helped by an appeal for divine aid.

But there comes a time in that life when because of his contact with his environment, because of his associations with other individuals, because of the expansion of his mind, he learns new mental traits, and forms new habits. Then there comes a period of confusion, a period when young people may drift away from the church. We see them drifting away; we see them becoming indifferent. They may even drift so far as to question the very existence of Deity. They are in a period of life that is full of dangers spiritually. But if they are kept in a proper environment, where proper influences are thrown around them, there comes a complete readjustment to conditions, and they find themselves on firmer ground than before.

What is true of individuals is true of groups. You who have been alert to conditions in the church know that it has been passing through such a period of confusion, that we have been breaking up some old habits in the process of forming new. It means that we are passing from the activities contingent upon the solution of the older problems to the activities necessary to meet these later conditions. We

are entering a period when the church must broaden the sphere of its activities, must apply itself to the solution of problems not present a generation ago. Perhaps many of you sense the resulting confusion, and are disturbed as to the outcome. But if we do our part and heed the admonition to stand aside and see the salvation of the Lord made manifest, you will soon see the time when there will appear full justification for our change of activity, and you will look back and wonder why you were disturbed. It is a good thing for people to be disturbed once in a while.

So the church must readjust itself to changed conditions, and must reform its ranks in order to make a different attack on the forces of the enemy than we have ever made before. You know when an army has been engaged in battling, there come times when it must reform its forces, rearrange lines, re-adjust its plans, and then go on fighting for the same cause. The general or commander of the whole army may be quite aware of every step that is being taken, and yet the men in the battalion may feel confused, when as a matter of fact everything is being purposively worked out. Such a time of re-adjustment has reached us, and hence I feel like bearing a particular message to some of the priesthood to-day. That message can be summed up in one sentence. We expect every man to do his duty, his full duty.

DEACONS

We might begin with the deacon. Of course the deacons shall be concerned about the welfare of their congregations; not only the welfare of their congre-

gations, so far as building a fire in the church is concerned, but that they be busy acquainting themselves with the duty of a deacon, so that they can enter into that larger field of activity of a deacon's work which has not been entered into heretofore. I look upon the deacons as being one of the most important arms of the priesthood. They are a part of the financial arm of the church, and are by virtue of their ordination, agents for and workers with the general bishopric. They have not been utilized in the past as such to the extent that they should, and I am satisfied that the bishopric, the general bishopric, has come far short of its possibilities by not utilizing this corps of officers that the Lord himself has set in the church for that purpose. The deacons are not only to teach the financial law, but they should be men who would be of service to the bishopric in collecting tithes, offerings, and the general funds of the church. Not only that, but they should be of direct assistance to the bishopric in dispensing the money to the poor. The aggregate of money spent by the church as aid to the poor is very large in proportion to our other expenditures. Look over your bishop's account and note it. Perhaps this amount in the aggregate has grown unnecessarily large because we have not used the deacons as investigating officers, to investigate the condition of those who are demanding aid from the church. There may be and probably are many people who have been receiving aid from the church, who are not entitled to it. We have been giving money every month to people in this church who have sons and daughters abundantly able to keep them, and these

sons and daughters have unnaturally thrown the responsibility and care of their aged parents onto the church. Such sons and daughters should be compelled to provide the necessary care for their parents.

Then what is the difficulty so far as our deacons are concerned? One is this: Too frequently when we have a really first-class deacon who has been able to appreciate the needs of his congregation, knows how to seat them quietly, knows how to put song-books into their hands unostentatiously, knows how to regulate the ventilation of the church, keep it warm, knows how to raise money for the branch, we say, "What a fine fellow that is! We must ordain him to something higher," and we have spoiled many a first-class deacon to make an incompetent priest. One of the most spiritual bodies of men in the church ought to be the deaconate.

They ought to be first-class business men in every sense of the word. Ability to preach a sermon is not a prime requisite. Their first work is to administer the financial law, and keep the congregation alive to church financial duties. Then they would be discharging their duties as they should. We have never yet trained a proper corps of deacons in the church. But a good deacon who has been made an indifferent elder might yet functionize as a deacon. Let him take his Melchisedec priesthood along with him, and act as a deacon again.

I remember once that Brother Elbert A. Smith had occasion to go to Colorado Springs for his wife's health. Not knowing anyone out there he attended branch business meeting, and somebody

nominated him for deacon in the branch; he was elected, and he served. He would sweep out their very small building, build the fire, and have things ready for the congregation. The next spring when I saw him, I said, "Hello, Deacon Smith," and he instantly retorted, "Why, don't you know that a deacon in Colorado Springs is *higher* than one of the Presidency at Independence?" And let me tell you, that a deacon at Colorado Springs or anywhere else, who is doing his duty, is higher than one of the Presidency or anyone else who is not doing his duty.

° ABOUT TEACHERS

We have the same trouble with teachers that we have with deacons. A good many who should be teachers are making poor elders. There is not a more responsible office in the church than teacher. The difficulty has been that we have looked upon a teacher as a sort of church detective, to smell out trouble, and to get people out of the church as fast as the missionaries can get them into the church. It is well to be able to detect where trouble lies and to locate the responsibility when trouble comes along. But the difficulty is that many of them are able to locate trouble, but are lacking when it comes to knowing how to settle it, and one of the great duties of a teacher is to settle difficulties. How many teachers are capable of doing it?

So it goes with the priests and perhaps the elders. Do you know we have in places a whole quorum of elders with not a dozen regular appointments in the neighborhood, whole groups of elders, whose chief church occupation seems to be to criticize those who are trying to do something? They can tell the Presi-

dency and the Twelve what to do. They can tell you where the Twelve makes mistakes in appointments and falls short of duty. They can do all that, but when it comes to doing something themselves they have nothing to show.

How is it with you, elders? Are you magnifying your calling? The time is here when the church must clearly understand that ordination in this church means something, that it is not a mere conferring of honors. It means he must magnify his calling, that he must do something towards shouldering his responsibility and towards a most conscientious application to duty and to work. The time is here to ask every man who holds the priesthood, whether it be deacon, or priest, or teacher, to magnify his calling, or hand in his license and make room for those who will work. The slogan for every man of the priesthood is, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

BE CLEAN

"Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." In the first place that means that a man who has assumed responsibility in the church as a member of the priesthood and is therefore called upon to bear the vessels of the Lord should be clean in person. The same is true in regard to his personal appearance, his clothing.

The same is true particularly in regard to his language. There have been many persons, persons of talent and refinement, who have been repulsed by the things that they have heard fall from the lips of men whose language should at all times be clean ;

and I am sorry to say that in the past, and I do not know but what even in the present, the priesthood of this church have not been entirely blameless in that respect. Men holding the priesthood should not indulge in stories of a questionable character. They should not indulge in language unclean in any way. If they are disposed to be funny, let their wit be of the proper kind. There is clean humor, and the disposition to see the funny side of life is the salvation of some people, but there is a legitimate way to exercise it.

I would like to admonish all men who hold the priesthood to make a consistent and strenuous effort that they shall be clean in every sense of the word; that the elders as they pass from place to place, attempting to advise people in regard to their spiritual welfare and to purify their lives, may set an example to the people. The people have a right to expect that the men holding the priesthood shall be exemplary in their conversation, in their deeds, and in their thoughts.

PRIESTS

Whenever we have talked about, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," I always think about the sacrament. I have seen men administer the sacrament who were so filthy and dirty in their personal appearance that persons could hardly take the sacrament without nausea. It is decidedly wrong to violate the proprieties in any such way as that.

Any priest who is called upon to administer the sacrament, who does not think highly enough of his office to see that his hands and his face and his

clothing are clean when he carries about the vessels of the Lord bearing the sacramental meal, should be asked to resign his office at once. And they are being asked to resign in some places. In one of our stakes a priest was visited, and told: "Unless you clean up, and clean those whiskers and that dirty neck, and clean your hands, and put on decent clothing, we will not permit you to administer the sacrament in this branch." And that officer did exactly right.

Furthermore, priests as visiting officers are expected to go into the homes, to admonish the Saints to live clean personal lives, to remove from their homes that which is wrong spiritually. What kind of a spectacle does it present for a priest who is not clean in body or in conduct, to go into a home and ask those people to clean themselves up spiritually? It makes a farce of it.

Of course I could speak of the teachers and deacons the same way. Every officer should keep the thought before him constantly that the Lord has said, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." It applies to every one of the different offices.

The church has asked me to assume responsibilities as the president of the Melchisedec priesthood, and if that means anything it means that I am supposed to have a personal official supervision over those holding the Melchisedec priesthood in all parts of the church, and I am firmly determined that every man holding the Melchisedec priesthood shall be asked to keep himself clean, to keep himself in a state of activity, to show that he is magnifying his calling. If there are men holding the Melchisedec

priesthood who are inactive, yet who are in position to work, who are not disqualified by personal disability, or who are not so completely tied down by other affairs that they are not able to work, I expect to ask for their licenses, if they persistently refuse to magnify their calling. I believe I shall be justified in doing it.

Furthermore, I shall feel myself justified in asking for the license of any man who thinks more of his chew of tobacco than he thinks of his license. Not that I think that a man who chews tobacco will forever be denied admittance to celestial glory, but I do not doubt that he will have to go through a probation of cleaning up first. We have of course never made the use of tobacco a test of fellowship, yet in the matter of cleanliness alone we have a right to expect that the ministry shall maintain a higher standard than the membership.

Furthermore, I think that I shall be justified in asking a man to surrender his license when he has an unsavory reputation in his neighborhood, even if we cannot prove anything against him. There are men in this church, I could put my hands on several of them without any trouble, who hold licenses, who are known as men who are dishonest, who will not pay their debts, who are known as trouble-makers, but we cannot prove anything against them. I say I think we will be justified in taking their licenses, and insisting that they establish a reputation for honor and integrity. We have already recalled some licenses and silenced men for such cause.

Furthermore, I think we will be justified in demanding the licenses of men who constantly mis-

represent this church rather than represent it; men who go out and ride hobbies, that they know are not in harmony with the teachings of the church. Some do this claiming that they should be granted what they term "liberty of speech." Within certain limits it is true that they may say what they please. As individuals they can criticize the men of the church, and even make personal attacks on them, so long as they keep within certain limits prescribed by law. But there is a much closer limit beyond which they cannot go and retain their rights as representative men of the church. Some men distort liberty of speech into license of speech. I have seen men who were unable to earn their living drawing monthly allowances from this church, yet misrepresenting it, who said they had a right to say what they pleased. I say, Certainly you have a right to say what you please, but we have the right to say whether you can say it as our representatives or not.

A characteristic of this latter-day religion is that it has given to us an ideal, He that is warned, let him warn his neighbor. That is missionary work. Of course I know that some of our people have been most unwise in warning their neighbors, and have been unreasonable in their unwise zeal in forcing our religion on people who did not want it. They do not seem to know when it is time to warn their neighbors, and they make themselves obnoxious as a result. The first thing necessary is to create a desire to hear what you have to say.

The times demand the true missionary spirit throughout the church. I should like to see the time soon come when around Independence and Lamoni

particularly, and in other populous districts of the church, there shall be appointments held every Sunday regularly by men of the priesthood, that shall keep every man in the Melchisedec priesthood busy from two to three times on Sunday. I should like to see the Aaronic priesthood assisting in that, and you people who have cars and teams can be of great assistance in our missionary work, by seeing that the missionaries are transported to the places where services are to be held.

Between Lamoni and Independence, for instance, there is a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles that covers one of the most fertile and one of the best agricultural territories in this part of the country, and yet we do not own very much of it. I have heard my father say that he expected to see the time come when a person could drive from Independence to Lamoni and eat every meal in the home of a Latter Day Saint. I should like to see the time, when a person could start out on foot and never be out of sight of land owned by people of the church.

I should like to see the proselytizing work of the church carried forward so vigorously that in Independence, Lamoni, Far West, Kansas City, and Holden Stakes every family head shall have had a chance to accept or reject this gospel, by having heard it in its fullness. Is that too high an ideal? How can it be done? By real missionary work, under the direction of the Twelve, intensified missionary work, engaged in by all who have talent, till even the local priesthood shall offer their services, even if it be only for one hour or two hours a week, or as much as they can spare. We have not given the

Lord half a chance to convert the people of this country, for we have not done our part. It demands a consecrated ministry and a consecrated membership working together with a definite purpose in view.

Let me give you a little mathematics of it. If we are going to establish Zion, or redeem Zion by purchase, how much money do you think it will take? Jackson County is an immensely wealthy county. Out riding not long ago about six or seven miles south of Independence and about ten or fifteen miles from Kansas City, we saw a sign up on a piece of land, "This, fine eighty acres of land for sale at \$600 per acre. Can you beat it?" How much of Jackson County do you think you are able to redeem? When you get over to Kansas City, six hundred dollars per acre looks small.

Some time ago we were driving to the Holden Stake conference, and Sister Krahl was in our car. As we passed over that magnificent agricultural country, I said, "There is your mission. You cannot buy it, but you might convert the people that own it." If we make our rightful effort it will be easy for the Lord to do his part, and you may be surprised that you ever wondered how to redeem Zion. But we cannot do it unless there is extant among our people this spirit of consecration that will give to God and his service every talent, every ability, every bit of wealth that we possess. I wish first for the consecration of your efforts and your talents, and then as a secondary thing for your wealth, or your property.

One more appeal I wish to make. It seems to me

that it has constantly been the mission of the priesthood to stand against iniquity in every form, to stand against it without fear or favor. In some places we find that our people recognize that there is iniquity existing in their midst, that is undermining the spirituality of the people and is putting them in a dangerous position spiritually, yet their tongues are silent, they are not raising up their hands against it, simply because they fear to estrange people who are not members of the church.

You cannot afford to do this, you cannot afford, you men of the priesthood, ever to be found not raising your hands against iniquity wherever you find it; and it doesn't make any difference to me how completely you estrange people who sanction it. I know they will have a more wholesome respect for you always if you stand fairly and squarely for your convictions, and less respect for you if you attempt to compromise principle for the sake of maintaining friendship.

You cannot expect the ministry to stand out against iniquity unless you uphold their hands in righteousness. Our positions in the church as officers are occupied by your choice, and we endeavor to care for your interests; but we cannot do it unless you give us your support. It is unfair in the extreme for you to select men to positions of responsibility in this church, from the deaconate to the Presidency, and then stand aside and criticize rather than assist them. They are your servants, and their success can come only by reason of the contribution of your support and your cooperation, and I plead for it. It must be given.

Our work cannot go forward unless the membership shall stand fairly and squarely in unbroken ranks behind the men they have asked to assume responsibility, and take up the work of leadership.

Leadership is nothing unless there is something to lead, and a man cannot lead a people who are pulling back. We will make mistakes, but let us make our mistakes in going ahead instead of going back. We can then correct the mistakes and still struggle onward and upward.

I become very earnest, especially when I see the enormous amount of work to be done, when my mental view is expanded and I see the long road that is to be passed, and the shortness of the time in which it is to be traversed, and then look back and see the small progress we have made. I sometimes become disturbed in soul, but I realize that if we are engaged in the Lord's work, if we will do our part, we will yet traverse this road to his glory and the advancement of his cause, because of the exercise of his great power.

May his peace be with us.

FREDERICK M. SMITH.