

Groundbreaking Services

Excerpts from President David O. McKay's Church College of Hawaii/
BYU-Hawaii dedication

PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY

February 12, 1955

My esteemed fellow workers, brothers, and sisters—this is the beginning of the realization of a vision I saw 34 years ago when one morning President Hugh J. Cannon, President E. Wesley Smith, others, and I witnessed a flag raising ceremony by students of the Church school here in Hawaii in Laie. In that little group of students were Hawaiians, what do you call them—Haoles, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and Filipinos. We listened to each one, a representative from each of these groups, pay tribute to the stars and stripes as the flag was pulled up there on the flagpole and all vowed allegiance. That ceremony brought tears to my eyes. Truly the melting pot, but more impressive than that was our assembly in the old chapel that stood by. There we met as members of The Church of Jesus Christ—Hawaiians, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, all the races represented on this island. There we met as one, members of the Church, the Restored Church of Christ. What an example in this little place of the purposes of our Father in Heaven to unite all peoples by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That was a Church school and we visualized the possibilities of making this the center, in accordance with the dedication of the land years ago, the center of the education of the people of these islands... Now today, after many years, 34 years, we are assembled to break ground for the Church College, furnishing an opportunity for the younger boys and girls who have had an opportunity to get the rudiments of the grade schools and also with it Church teachings, to come here and continue their high school and their college courses. What a glorious opportunity.

As I visualize those opportunities and think of the past, my heart is filled with gratitude, first for the inspiration of the Lord to the early leaders of the Church to dedicate this land as a gathering place for the Hawaiians and other races of these cherished islands. May I say these blessed islands.

Further, I am deeply grateful as you are for the ideals of the Church of Christ in education. Do you realize that two years, if I remember rightly, two years after the Church was organized the Lord gave a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith urging the members, urging him and his associates—through them all the members of the Church, to study and treasure the things of education in all fields. It came to me this morning, and I wrote out the words for you right now, and I cannot do better than to read them on this occasion as the evidence of the need of education. (Hope I didn't bring the wrong book.)

1832, I'm right, 2 years after the Church was organized, note this, 'I give unto you a commandment that you teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel and in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God.' That's first, 'that are expedient for

you to understand.' He didn't know that the man who was considered the wisest American from an educational standpoint would someday say that character is higher than intellect a great soul should be fit to live as well as to think. But in that revelation he places the injunction upon those people to teach ye diligently regarding the principles and doctrines and the law of the gospel. But he goes further than that. You should teach things 'both in heaven and in the earth,' geology, mineralogy. He doesn't say that; when I pause, that's in parenthesis. 'Things which have been,' the whole progress of the human race 'things which are,' current events. 'Things which must shortly come to pass,' signs of the times because of the turmoil that we have; 'things which are at home,' domestic relations; 'the wars and perplexities of nations and the judgments which are on the land,' the inevitable results of contention and hatred; 'and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms,' international relations. Now, why? 'That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you and the mission with which I have commissioned you.'

The young man wrote that under inspiration two years after the church was organized, April 6, 1830. You tell me that he got that out of his own knowledge and wisdom, unschooled as he was, and I tell you it is impossible to do it. Whence hath this man learning? From the inspiration of God.

Now that tells us what this school is being built for; the purpose for which it is being built, first, the things pertaining to God and His kingdom, a testimony of the existence of Deity. Know that He lives and that He is our Father, the Father of all mankind and ruler of brothers. What that means toward peace, establishing peace in the world. Secondly, that those noble men and women, the world needs them. One man said the world needs men who cannot be bought or sold, men who will scorn to violate truth, genuine gold. That is what this school is going to produce. More than that, they'll be leaders. Not leaders only in this island, but everywhere. All the world is hungering for them and best of all the world is recognizing them. How many of them are in the leading offices of our nation today? Count the number who are in the colleges throughout the land. I've been astonished as I've gone from state to state to meet the members of our church who are leaders in those colleges and universities of the land. A little church of a million, yes, that's all we are, a million three hundred fifty thousand, but how those members, representatives who are true to the ideals, will leaven the whole lot.

God bless you. Higher than intellect and that's the highest, higher than education is reason. Higher than that is the inspiration that comes from Heaven, and whoever teaches here in this school, I'll put it this way, no man or woman should teach in this college who doesn't have in his or her heart an assurance, not a mere belief, an assurance, that God has had his hand over this entire valley, that dedication offered years ago was inspired, that this land is a choice land. It's part of America, part of Zion. Furthermore, that the gospel plan as revealed by our Father in Heaven through His Son to the Prophet Joseph, is the only plan by which the world, by obedience, may obtain peace. I feel that as you do with all my heart. No matter what their theories are, no matter what their desires and schemes may be, eventually they will have to come back to the principles of the gospel and the kingdom as will be taught in this school.

You mark that word, and from this school, I'll tell you, will go men and women whose influence will be felt for good towards the establishment of peace internationally. Four hundred and fifty million people waiting to hear the message over in China, noble race. I've met them. I don't know how many million over in Japan. You prepare to go and carry that message. Three hundred and fifty million down in India. We have scarcely touched these great nations.

Dedicatory prayer

Our Heavenly Father, we feel that the channels of communication between Thee and us have been opened on this sacred occasion. We invoke thy blessings, thy divine blessings, upon all that has been said and done on this most memorable occasion. We have confidence and we have the assurance that thou hast given thy approval to this, the breaking of ground for the Church College of Hawaii.

Now, might we invoke thy blessings and thy divine guidance upon the Board of Education, upon the president and the faculty of this institution, upon the people throughout these islands and especially upon this land of Laie. May it from this moment forward be what thou would have it become, be what the early fathers blessed this land to become. May their vision then, and the vision of these choice men who stood so valiantly by that prophecy, be realized, and to that end we again consecrate this land.

We dedicate our actions in this service unto thee and unto thy glory and to the salvation of the children of men, that this college, and the temple, and the town of Laie may become a missionary factor, influencing not thousands, not tens of thousands, but millions of people who will come seeking to know what this town and its significance are.

To this end we consecrate our actions, imploring thy guidance and thy inspiration to attend those who lay the foundation of the college, who build it and especially upon those who teach and the students who come to be instructed, and all this we do in the name of thy beloved son and by virtue of the holy priesthood, even so, amen.

*Selected quotes compiled from transcripts of tapes and materials on file at the BYU-Hawaii Archives; (File: CCH/BYUH, Dedications).