

Church College of Hawaii Dedicatory Address and Prayer

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David O. McKay was president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1951 to 1970. This address and prayer were published as a pamphlet and in Law, Founding, 252–58. This Something Wonderful publication of President McKay’s dedicatory address and prayer have been reedited based on audio files from 1958 provided by BYU–Hawaii Archives.

Our nation is facing stupendously critical problems, not the least of which is the present-day indifference toward the need of better training and proper education of youth—our most precious asset, our greatest safeguard, our most important, most potentially profitable enterprise.

Students enter school primarily to gain economic or social advantage. But this aim is not always achieved—nor is it, nor should it be, the highest purpose of education. However, we must not underestimate the value of obtaining an education for a livelihood. Education for economic advancement is a good investment for the individual as well as for the state. The United States as a nation is still young, but its brief history is replete with striking examples of the value of its free public school system even as a financial investment.

Here, for instance, was the son of a slave entering Iowa State College, having worked his own way through the grades, high school, and three years at Simpson College. Four years later he took his degree in agriculture. His work so impressed the authorities that they appointed him a member of the college faculty. Soon thereafter, he refused a tempting offer of one hundred thousand dollars a year. As a child, frail and undernourished, he had earned a living by doing odd household chores. His adopted parents wanted him to get an education but had offered him no money. The handicapped boy’s primary purpose was the same as that of every other child in America: namely, to gain economic and social betterment, to broaden his means of gaining a livelihood. Experts say that this man, Dr. George Washington Carver, whose mother was sold as a slave, traded for a racehorse, had done more than any other living man to rehabilitate agriculture in the South. Since 1898 the industry that he fostered has grown until it now runs into more than sixty million dollars a year.

No, I do not in the least disparage this aim, nor criticize our public school system for planning to make possible its realization. But education for a livelihood is not the highest purpose of education. “The fallacious belief,” writes Dr. Robert M. Hutchins, formerly chancellor of the University of Chicago,

that education can in some way contribute to vocational and social success has done more than most things to disrupt American education. What education can do, and perhaps all it can do, is to produce a trained mind. . . .

*. . . It is principles, and everlastingly principles, not data, not facts, not helpful hints, but principles, which the rising generation requires if it is to find its way through the mazes of tomorrow. No man among us can tell what tomorrow will be like. All we know with certainty is that it will be different from today. [“The Education We Need,” in *Ferment in Education; The Problems, Responsibilities, and Opportunities of Universities in This Time; A Symposium at the Installation of George Dinsmore Stoddard as President of the University of Illinois* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1948), 34–35; emphasis in original]*

To train childhood along these conventional lines, there was expended on education, including high schools, during 1950, five billion dollars in America. At first thought this seems to be a great sum of money—as much as the American people spend on horse racing every year! In that same period, it is estimated (now note) that crime and criminals cost the government five times that amount. This is a state of affairs that reminds one of Joseph Malins' poem "The Fence or the Ambulance" (1895):

*Better guide well the young than reclaim them when old,
For the voice of true wisdom is calling:
"To rescue the fallen is good, but 'tis best
To prevent other people from falling."
Better close up the source of temptation and crime,
Than deliver from dungeon or galley;
Better put a strong fence 'round the top of the cliff,
Than an ambulance down in the valley.*

Law enforcement agencies reported that about fifteen percent of those arrested and fingerprinted involved young people under twenty-one years of age. Patriotic citizens, clear-thinking men, look with apprehension and foreboding upon this increasing tendency of youth toward delinquency and criminality and with commendable zeal and enterprise put forth every effort to foster counteracting and uplifting organizations.

Fellow citizens and brothers and sisters, let us face clearly and forcefully the fact that the paramount ideal permeating all education—in the grades, the high school, throughout college and the university—should be more spiritual than economic for the good of our country.

I am but repeating what we all know and feel—and as it has been expressed today by our speakers—when I say that our country's greatest asset is its manhood. Upon that depends not only the survival of the individual freedom vouchsafed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and all other ideals for which the founders of the Republic fought and died, but also the survival of the best that we cherish in present-day civilization throughout the world.

Only through proper education can these fundamental principles become fixed and guiding influences in the lives of human beings. Our educational system will radiate such principles just to the extent (now note) that we employ in our public schools, high schools, colleges, and universities men and women who are not only eminent in their particular professions but loyal to the Constitution of our land—influential as leaders, noble in character.

Imagine what it would mean, you men and women, to the national integrity of America if every one of the half million graduates, in addition to his having earned his diploma, would cherish the memory of a noble teacher of whom, throughout the years, he could say, as a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States said of one who influenced his university career [and who was] one of his teachers in our Church school:

[I] *admired him for his learning, loved him for his goodness, and . . . profited greatly from both. . . .*

. . . He believed that scholastic attainments were better than riches, but that better than either were faith, love, charity, clean living, clean thinking, loyalty, tolerance and all the other attributes that combine to constitute that most precious of all possessions, good character.

[George Sutherland, writing about his former professor Karl G. Maeser in "A Message to the

1941 Graduating Class of Brigham Young University from Mr. Justice George Sutherland,” 4 June 1941, 2, 10; L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University]

In his appreciation of the instructor who wielded the most influence in his life, this leader of men is but echoing the sentiments expressed by Ralph Waldo Emerson, reputedly the wisest American: “Character is higher than intellect. . . . A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think” (*The American Scholar* [1837], section 3). The most potent influence in training our youth to cherish life, to keep the word of honor, and to have increased respect for humankind and love of justice is the life and personality of the teacher. Dr. Ralph McDonald [of the National Education Association] rightly portrays as follows the high class of men and women whom youth should have as leaders and exemplars:

The teachers of our young must be strong and vigorous, keen of intellect, balanced in outlook, superior in personality traits, deep-rooted in their spiritual foundations. They must have a passionate devotion to human freedom and be anchored to an abiding faith in the improbability of man. To such an outstanding personality must be added education in the heritage of the human race, in a loving understanding of human growth and development, in the precepts of democracy, in the lore of the school, and in the skills of teaching. [As paraphrased by Charles Luckman in “Low Cost Peace,” *Ferment in Education*, 81]

The contribution of general education to the industrial and commercial greatness of the country is obvious on every hand in research laboratories; in increased productivity of farms; in achievements of electrical, physical, chemical, and engineering sciences; and in harnessing, either for the benefit or the destruction of man, the boundless force of atomic energy. But what true education has done and may do to awaken in the human heart a sense of the end and aim of human existence on this earth, what it has done to raise the standard of citizenship, and how it has helped to make living happier by contributing to the prosperity, peace, and security of our country are beyond evaluation.

I look upon all recipients of true education as individuals and groups radiating an influence that makes less dense and ineffective the darkness of ignorance, of suspicion, of hatred, of bigotry, avarice, and greed that continue to envelop in darkness the lives of men. Of course, to quote Newell Dwight Hillis:

Not all men are of equal value. Not many Platos: only one, to whom a thousand lesser minds look up and learn to think. Not many Dantes: one, and a thousand poets tune their harps to his and repeat his notes. Not many Raphaels: one, and no second. But a thousand lesser artists looking up to him are lifted to his level. Not many royal hearts—great magazines of kindness. Happy the town blessed with a few great minds and a few great hearts. One such citizen will civilize an entire community. [*A Man’s Value to Society: Studies in Self-Culture and Character* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1896), 8; see also Hillis, *The Investment of Influence: A Study of Social Sympathy and Service* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 45]

The church and school systems are separate in our land. There are those—great teachers too, some of them—who think they may teach no religion and not violate that great part of our Constitution. Our church schools are free to teach all good things, to teach and train boys and

girls to be more useful citizens in various walks and trades of life, but they are also free to teach that which is higher—that is a belief in God, in His goodness, in His existence—and to teach without hesitancy condemnation of any group or nation that cries disbelief in a Creator, disbelief in the home, disbelief in the free agency of man. I refer to Communists who have come out not as a nation but as a group in condemning the very things that our country needs: faith in the Eternal Creator and belief in the universal brotherhood of man and that man is God's greatest blessing and has the responsibility of glorifying Him, for He has said: This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the eternal knowledge and everlasting existence of man (see Moses 1:39). This is His glory. All of these things I have named, this school stands for. I congratulate all who have participated in its erection. I commend you for your efforts, for your self-denial. I pray to God to guide you members of the faculty now, today, and in the future that you may be leaders, inspirers of the youth who come to trust you and to learn of you in this, the Church College of Hawaii.

And now it is my privilege and honor to dedicate these buildings for these and other high purposes. I but represent you in so doing. If you will join me, I will offer the dedicatory prayer.

Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, we come to Thee this day in gratitude, in love, in faith, not only because Thou art the Creator of all the universe and the Restorer of all blessings, but principally because Thou art our Father, whom we can approach and be received as Thine own. Thus to know Thee and Thy Beloved Son is to have eternal life.

This large assembly of Thy children, the program rendered in sermon and song, all buildings erected, equipment furnished, the instruments and mechanical devices that are in these buildings—all are in use and action because of divine instruction from Thee to the end that Thy children shall teach one another the doctrines of the kingdom and all things that pertain to the kingdom of God that are expedient to understand: things both in heaven and in earth, under the earth, things that have been, things that are, things that must shortly come to pass, things that are at home, things that are abroad, the wars and the perplexities of nations and the judgments that are on the land, and the knowledge of countries and of kingdoms—all this and more that Thy Saints may be prepared in all things to magnify their calling whereunto Thou hast called them and the mission with which Thou didst commission them (see D&C 88: 78–80).

Thou hast emphasized the responsibility that rests upon Thy people to carry the message of the Restoration of the gospel to all nations. Thus dost Thou emphasize the fact that it is not sufficient merely to testify to the world of the Restoration but to present the principles of the gospel in an intelligent manner that the honest in heart may be convinced of the truth and may be led from paths of error into the way of righteousness.

To this general and glorious purpose, therefore, our Father, we unitedly assemble and authoritatively dedicate the Church College of Hawaii. We dedicate the reception foyer, the administration building, devotional auditorium and chapel, library, cafeteria, the technology building, the classrooms, the gymnasium, and dormitories. May each, O Father, have Thy guiding and protecting care that it may be protected and saved from destruction and that the purposes for which each has been built may be fully accomplished. We dedicate the grounds, the campus, and all associated with these buildings. May those who pass and look at these buildings from afar be influenced and be led to look up to Thee and contribute their efforts for the blessings of mankind.

We are grateful for this country in which these buildings are erected, grateful for the

freedom that is vouchsafed for the individual, for the Constitution of the United States. Holy Father, bless the president and his cabinet and all associated with him in Congress and the judiciary, that the position occupied by this great country as leader of the nations may be maintained and that the leaders thereof may be men of integrity, showing forth the benefit of true democracy to the peoples of the world.

We are grateful that in this country Thou didst, with Thy Holy Beloved Son, appear to the Prophet Joseph and, through subsequent heavenly visitations, gave the authority of the priesthood to establish Thy Church as it was established in the meridian of time by Thy Beloved Son.

Bless those who have authority at this time to carry forth Thy will. Guide them and protect them. Keep them from error. By virtue of the authority of the priesthood and as president of the board of trustees, representing that body, I dedicate and set apart each building, each of these rooms and halls for the purpose for which it has been built and pray, O God, that each may be protected and utilized for the blessing of students, for the advancement of Thy Church, and for the blessing of mankind.

May there radiate from these buildings an aura of light as tangible as personality radiates from each individual, influencing all to live clean and upright lives, to seek truth diligently, to be inspired so to live that others seeing their good deeds may live to glorify Thee, our Creator, our Father, our God.

Bless this institution that it may hold the respect of sister educational institutions and wield an influence throughout the world for good to all educational circles. To this end, Father, continue to bless the board of trustees, the president of this institution, and his associates in the presidency. Continue to uphold them and inspire them. Bless the faculty, the deans, the student body, and all associated with this center of learning. Give the instructors the ability to see clearly the discernment between truth and error, that they may be successful in refuting the false philosophy of communism and other pernicious doctrines that would destroy the free agency of man and faith in our Father and Creator of heaven and earth and weaken and perhaps destroy faith and belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Help us, O Father, to appreciate the sacrifices and accomplishments of the past. Give us power and intelligence to contribute to the pressing and progressive demands of the present. Give us inspiration in all efforts that tend to establish peace among nations, goodwill toward men.

From the high and glorious point of the revelation of Thyself and Thy Beloved Son to the Prophet Joseph, may we be, in every sense of the word, loyal, true to the best that is within us, and consecrate our lives and our efforts to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, we humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.