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Why the J. Reuben Clark Law School? Dedicatory Address and Prayer of the J. Reuben Clark Law Building (September 5, 1975)

Marion G. Romney

As I approach this task of saying a few words in the presence of this august gathering, realizing that this school is named after President J. Reuben Clark, I'm reminded of a question that he once put to me. I was at the time manager of the Welfare Office as assistant managing director of the program. In that capacity I had frequent contact with him because he was the member of the Presidency responsible for that particular work. I used to write letters to the Presidency on problems and sometimes they didn't answer very promptly. I remember once when I had a problem that I wrote to the Presidency, saying, "I think these are the facts and I think the decision should be this. If I don't hear from you shortly, I will so proceed." When he received my note, President Clark called me on the phone and said: "Kid, who do you think you are, writing to the Presidency like that?" "Well," I said, "I've got to move and I can't get answers." He said: "When we don't respond, you have your answer."

As I attempt to participate on this program in the presence of all the wisdom we've heard from President Kimball, President Tanner, President Oaks, the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and Justice Powell, I'm asking myself that question, "Who do you think you are?"

It has been suggested, nevertheless, that I might comment on the reasons for the establishment of J. Reuben Clark Law School. I cannot say with certainty what was in the minds of those who made the final decision to establish the school. I can, however, tell you why I used such influence as I had to get it established. To begin with, I have long felt that no

branch of learning is more important to an individual or to society than law. I further felt that the educational base at Brigham Young University—the flagship of our Church educational system—would be and should be broadened by the establishment of a law school. I likewise felt that the atmosphere of honor, integrity, patriotism, and benevolence prevailing at Brigham Young University would be a good influence upon a law school and its student body. I also desired to have perpetuated on this campus the memory and influence of President J. Reuben Clark Jr.—a great lawyer, patriot, statesman, and church leader. It’s my hope that all faculty and student body members will familiarize themselves with and emulate his virtues and accomplishments.

President Clark believed in law, both human and divine. He accepted as truth the modern scripture which declares that there is a

light [which] proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

... which [light] is the law by which all things are governed. . . .

And [that] there are many kingdoms; . . .

And unto every kingdom is given a law; . . .

And [that God] hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons;

And their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets. . . .

The earth rolls upon her wings [saith the Lord], and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God. . . .

. . . and any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power.¹

President Clark also believed, as do all Latter-day Saints, that the law which “proceedeth forth from the presence of God” is binding upon this earth and its inhabitants. He believed as do we, that

[t]here is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.²

Laws on which a peaceful, progressive, prosperous, and happy society must be built are prescribed in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. Our knowledge that the origin, scope, and universality of law is thus revealed in the scriptures enhances rather than demeans or diminishes our appreciation and respect for the law of the land.

We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society.³

As a matter of fact, we believe that the Almighty was instrumental in setting up the constitutional government of the United States. He himself so declared. In the early days of the Church (1833), the Lord admonished the Saints to importune for redress:

According to the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established, and [which] should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles;

That every man may act in doctrine and principles pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment. . . .

And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose.⁴

The Lord also said that the

law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind. . . .

I, the Lord God, make you free, . . . and the law also maketh you free.

Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold.⁵

The Prophet Joseph Smith Jr., who under divine direction organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said:

The Constitution of the United States is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God. It is a heavenly banner; it is to all those who are privileged with the sweets of its liberty, like the cooling shades and refreshing waters of a great rock in a thirsty and weary land. It is like a great tree under whose branches men from every clime can be shielded from the burning rays of the sun.⁶

What has been said about law, as revealed in the scriptures, does not in any way conflict with the law of the land. To the contrary, the divine author of our modern scriptures says, and I quote:

Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land. . . .

Behold, the laws which ye have received from my hand are the laws of the church, and in this light ye shall hold them forth.⁷

Our background increases our love for the Constitution, deepens our respect for the bar and the judiciary, and urges us, individually, to be law-abiding. President Clark expressed our point of view well when, speaking to the Los Angeles County Bar Association, he said:

I am . . . mindful that in speaking to you, I am speaking to a distinguished group of that great body of our citizenry, who, because of their training and experience, must take an important place in the future of this country, whether we shall go left or go right. You who are elevated to the Bench are

the dispensers of justice and equity to the people, the guardians of the peace and the order of our society. You who are of the Bar man the watchtowers of the nation that give view far and near. Your eyes must be the first to see and you the first to make ready to meet the oncoming of tyranny. Upon the Bench and the Bar of the country rests the great responsibility of seeing that our liberties and free institutions are preserved. Legislators may be incompetent, executives may be dishonest, but if the Bench and Bar be honest and filled with integrity, then under the Constitution, the people are secure, and the free institutions will still live with us. But security and liberty both take flight where the [Bar and/or] the judiciary [are] corrupt.⁸

In establishing this J. Reuben Clark School of Law, we hoped to attract a student body capable of being trained and to assemble a faculty competent to teach, train, and inspire such students to be topflight lawyers and superior judges—men who in their private and professional lives will, by precept and example, implement the high ideals and standards which we have been talking about.

Although we have been in operation but two years, operating in makeshift quarters, we feel that we have made creditable progress. With this new building, we shall move rapidly toward our goals.

Now if you will join with me in a prayer, we shall dedicate this magnificent edifice.

Dedicatory Prayer

Our beloved Father in heaven, reverently we approach thee on this memorable occasion in earnest prayer. We thank thee for the vision of the importance of education, legal and otherwise, with which thou hast inspired the leaders of thy people from the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. until today. We express our appreciation for this splendid building; we thank thee for the material prosperity which has enabled us to erect it, including the generous contributions made by liberal friends and supporters.

We are grateful for the life and example of the late President J. Reuben Clark Jr., in whose honor this building is named. And now, in the authority of the holy priesthood, we dedicate this magnificent edifice unto thee to house the J. Reuben Clark Law School. We dedicate the building, its furnishings, the library, and every other thing appertaining thereto, including the land on which it stands. We pray that thou wilt preserve it and protect it from the ravages of nature and the molestation of evil men.

We invoke thy blessings upon the administrators, faculty members, and students who shall function therein. We pray, Father, that the students trained in this building will rise to the challenge of Josiah Gilbert Holland's stirring lines:

God give us men. A time like this demands
 Strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands! . . .
 Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
 Men who possess opinions and a will;
 Men who have honor; Men who will not lie;
 Men who can stand before a demagogue
 And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking.
 Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog,
 In public duty and in private thinking.
 For while the rabble, with their thumb-worn creeds,
 Their large professions and their little deeds,
 Mingle in selfish strife—lo! Freedom weeps;
 Wrong rules the land, and waiting Justice sleeps.

And Father, help the lawyers trained in this law school to remember that they are to be the guardians of the law Isaiah spoke of three thousand years ago, when he said: “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”⁹ These thanks we give, Father, these blessings we plead for, and this dedication we make in the worthy name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, amen.

This dedicatory address and prayer was given at BYU Law School on September 5, 1975. Reprinted from Dedication: To Justice, To Excellence, To Responsibility: Proceedings at the Convocation and Dedication of the J. Reuben Clark College of Law, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, September 5, 1975 (Provo, Utah: BYU Printing Service, 1975), 43–48.

Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) received his LL.B. from the University of Utah in 1932 and an honorary Doctor of Laws from Brigham Young University in 1975. He served as a General Authority 1941–88, member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles 1951–88, counselor in the First Presidency 1972–85, and president of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles 1985–88.

Notes

1. D&C 88:12–13, 37–38, 42–43, 45, 47.
2. D&C 130:20–21.
3. D&C 134:1.
4. D&C 101:77–78, 80.
5. D&C 98:5, 8, 10.
6. *History of the Church*, 3:304.
7. D&C 58:21, 23.
8. J. REUBEN CLARK JR., *Some Factors in the Proposed Post-War International Pattern*, in *SELECTED PAPERS ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS* 407, 407–8 (David H. Yarn Jr. ed., 1987) (address at the Los Angeles Bar Association, Feb. 24, 1944).
9. Isaiah 2:3.