

Pres. Joseph F. Smith, in the *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1903.

Moderation

Even in the days of Paul it was needful to caution the Saints to be moderate. In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle particularly admonishes the brethren in these words: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." While this, perhaps, is the only instance in the Bible where the word occurs, the idea of wisdom and moderation being essential in all things, is freely expressed in many other exhortations to the people. Thus Peter, the apostle, calling attention to the example of Christ, exhorts them to cease from sin, which is named as lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and other lusts of men. And again, Paul to the Ephesians instructs the saints "to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the spirit." It was Jesus himself who denounced the Pharisees because within they were full of "extortion and excess."

And so instances might be multiplied in which the Saints anciently were not only cautioned against sin, but were also instructed to avoid excesses. I believe there is need of a word of caution to the young people of the Latter-day Saints in this respect, and no better text can be impressed upon them than the words of Paul: "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Moderation in what? Well, for instance in amusements and pleasures. It is generally conceded that no religious body places as few restrictions upon its members as the Latter-day Saints. We believe in legitimate amusements, and have therefore sanctioned both the theater and the dance among our young people. But President Young was particular to make it plain that all our diversions were to be conducted in the spirit of the gospel. The balls and dances were to be opened and closed by prayer, and they were to commence early and close early. In all these respects, the young people are beginning to depart from the example and moderation set before them by the authorities of the Church. It has not only become a custom in some places to neglect to open and close parties by prayer, but it has become a fashion to begin at very late hours—say between 9 and 10 o'clock or even later—and to continue till long after midnight. This is immoderate, untimely, and contrary to the counsel of the priesthood. Dances, social parties, evening entertainments, and other amusements, should begin early, and never extend beyond midnight. Time limits must be observed, and, as Latter-day Saints, we must not neglect to thank God at all times, and to ask his blessings upon all we do, for that should be the spirit of every saint, who should ever act, even in his amusements, as if he realized that the "Lord is at hand." One other item in which some of the young people do not let their "moderation be known before men," is the practice of excessive buggy-riding. Ordinarily, there is no evil in riding in buggies or other vehicles. But it has become a custom or habit in some of the stakes of Zion to ride on Sundays, and very late at night, and to speed over the road at a rate that rather suggests a race track than a peaceful public highway. Buggy-riding on Sundays should be discouraged when it is engaged in merely for sport, or excessive pleasure. It should never be permitted late at night, for great evils may grow out of it, under such conditions; while at all times, reasonable and becoming conduct should guide the participants. There are many instances where it is necessary

to ride on Sundays; in the case of invalids whose guardians have no other time; missionaries who fill their appointments; people who come long distances to meetings; sick children, etc., but no young man is justified in quoting these to excuse his sporting on the Sabbath day, and he who does so certainly displays neither wisdom nor moderation.

We may make evil of all amusements, but the Saints should not be unwise, but rather understand what the will of the Lord is, and practice moderation in all things. They should avoid excesses and cease from sin, putting far from them "the lusts of men;" and in their amusements and pastimes adopt a course that looks to the spirit as well as the letter, the intention and not the act alone, the whole and not the part, which is the meaning of moderation. In this way their conduct will be reasonable and becoming, and they shall find no trouble in understanding the will of the Lord.

Let me exhort the young people particularly, and the Saints generally, to weigh well the value of moderation in all their actions and amusements. Remember, too, that excessive feasting is not good; neither is excessive labor, but idleness and waste of precious time is infinitely worse. "Let your moderation be known to all men."

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