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Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

On a recent trip, I was a guest in the home of a little boy about six or seven years of age. He was looking through his older brother's Boy Scout *Handbook*. He had turned to the section on tracking, where Scouts are taught to follow footprints of animals. He told me that he expects that this coming summer he will be out tracking, following footprints.

I looked beyond the footprints of animals to the footprints of human beings, and wondered whose foot tracks he would follow as he grew up. I wondered if they would be good tracks or bad tracks, and if the people who would make those tracks would be uplifting or degrading in their influence on him.

I picked up his book and turned to the section where I read the Boy Scout oath. You remember the first few words are, "On my honor I will do my best. . . ." As he grows up, what will this little boy learn about honor or dishonor? Who will teach him? Or does it really matter? How important is honor, anyway? Is it something sacred? Is it sacred to you? Is it sacred to very many Americans?

In my opinion, America needs a rebirth of honor more than it needs any other one thing. It needs honor more than it needs its atom bombs and nuclear submarines. Put weapons in the hands of dishonorable men and what have you?

America needs honor more than it needs wealth and prosperity. Put wealth in the hands of dishonorable men, and what have you?

America needs honor even more than it needs professions of religious piety. What good is a profession of religion in a man who has no honor? Such men lived in the days of Jesus. He called them scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

Have you been shocked at the public display of deception and dishonesty we have seen recently from coast to coast? Are you alarmed at the lack of character which has been exhibited? Are you frightened when the public conscience is dimmed and when men and women alike strive in greed and selfish-

ness to get all they can and give as little in return as they can?

Are you alarmed when working men laugh at the principle of giving an honest day's work for an honest day's pay? Are you shocked when large industries become involved in public scandals? Does it scare you to learn that our government was defrauded by its own citizens of five billion dollars in income tax in a single year?

Where will all this lack of honor take us? What will be its effect upon our children? Think of my little boy friend and his Boy Scout book: "On my honor . . ." What will honor mean to him?

The uniform crime reports of the FBI issued last September indicate that adults are responsible for eighty percent of the major crimes in the United States. Then, who is leading the march of dishonor and disgrace in America today?

Not the juvenile delinquents who get the headlines.

This same FBI report shows that the age group in which most arrests are made is the group fifty years of age and older. Think of it! More arrests among people fifty years of age and over than among any other age group in the United States! The next highest age group is made up of persons from thirty to thirty-four, and the next highest those from thirty-five to thirty-nine.

I wondered if this picture had changed in the last five years and looking in the FBI report of five years before, I discovered that still, even then, those fifty years of age and over accounted for more crimes than any other age group.

I was very interested in last year's report to discover that only nineteen percent of all the arrests for major crimes in the United States involved people under twenty-one years of age.

Do you remember the verse which says:

" 'Twas a sheep, not a lamb that strayed away

In the parable Jesus told,
A grown-up sheep that had gone astray
From the ninety and nine in the fold."

Our leaders in crime detection tell us that our increased juvenile crime is largely due to a great let-down in honor and integrity, a great collapse in the moral fiber of the nation. They warn us that when we overlook honesty on such a wide scale, national disaster may overtake us.

I recently read an editorial in the Richmond, Virginia, *News-Leader*, commenting on this moral breakdown in America, and making special reference to the "payola" scandal. The editor said:

"The fault lies wholly in ourselves, and in the sort of shallow, materialist society we have built for our country. Here we sit in our inner-spring cocoons, fashioned of infinite soft self-deceptions, and stare at the disc jockeys outside.

"Who will cast the first stone?"

"Will it be the farmer, paid for not farming his land?"

"Or will it be the executive, padding his expense account?"

"Will it be the student who cheats?"

"Will it be the veteran who fakes a disability? The bureaucrat who makes useless work? The politicians who buy votes? The special interests who buy politicians? The merchant whose fancy package conceals a shoddy product? Who is the condemner, who the condemned?"

"All this," says the editorial, "is not to condone for an instant the greedy, cynical and irresponsible conduct of those persons in the broadcasting industry whose contempt for the American boob is now so shockingly revealed. They are reaping their own whirlwind. It is merely to suggest that we get this scandal in perspective, painful as the process may be. . . .

". . . When our schools are crowded with 'crib courses' and our ministers are absorbed in the intricacies of administration, and our families have left it to somebody else to inculcate cultural values in their children, and the confiscatory nature of tax laws has made a nation of devious contrivers, no wonder a quiz show contestant sees deception as reality and fraud as accepted social behavior."

Recently I read an address given in Boise, Idaho, by Judge Philip Gilliam of Denver, the judge of the juvenile

court there. Among other things he said:

"It seems to me that there has been sweeping through America . . . an arbitration between right and wrong.

". . . you know," he said, "you see it with the adults so often: [they say] Don't be a sucker, why should I pay my taxes if there is any way to get out of it? . . .

"But you see it in the kids, too," he said. "Every now and then you talk to one of the kids we get in our training school for delinquent boys, and you say, 'Son, why did you break the law?' And he says, 'I didn't want to be a . . . chicken. . . ."

"Can you imagine Thomas Jefferson sitting back [in his day] and saying, 'I didn't want to be a chicken?'"

Then he continues: "Golly, friends, is there something wrong with being a decent guy, with being a responsible citizen . . . interested in community betterment . . . interested enough to make the effort for good government? Is decency becoming unpopular in this country?"

Then he says, "The great challenge of America is to be a decent guy, a constructive citizen, a responsible businessman, an honorable workingman. . . .

". . . The test of civilization is not how many cars you own or some of the things that have been glorified on TV and in the movies. The test of civilization is the kind of people we turn out." And he concludes, "I'm sure that is absolutely true."

My mind goes back to the little boy with the Scout manual. What if every American could but learn the first great lesson in that manual, the lesson of honor? What if every man were as honorable as he expects his son to be? What if every woman were as honorable as she hopes her children will be? What if every boy and girl had honor enthroned in their hearts and could pledge to all men that on that sacred honor they would do their best in life?

There is no happiness without honor. There is little success without doing one's best.

To instil in the mind and heart of a child the importance of honor and the value of doing his best, is one of our greatest tasks. What are we without

good character? Can good character exist without honor?

When we look at the life and teachings of the Savior, it was the hypocrite, the pretentious hypocrite, who received his most scathing criticism.

It was the honest widow giving her mite, who has lived in our memories as an example to be followed.

Judas the traitor will forever be the personification of dishonor at its worst. The prayer in Gethsemane will always be the criterion of devotion.

In this Church we have many marvelous character-building activities. We have outstanding organizations which teach honor and integrity to our young people. The Boy Scout movement is one of them. It is a well-established fact that this training in boys makes of them honorable citizens, with good character and high ideals.

Then in the light of our national moral status, in the knowledge of our great need to teach honor and integrity, in the interest of rearing the next generation to be better than the present one, do we not need more of scouting and other agencies which teach honesty and truth?

Scouting can help make a boy an outstanding man, a good church member, a good student, a good citizen. Then why are not more parents interested in this wonderful movement? Why is there resistance in many homes? Why do some officials who are charged with the welfare and development of boyhood side-step their responsibilities to the scouting program?

It seems incredible, in a day when so much temptation faces our youth, that any grown person, especially a parent or worker with youth, would fail to take full advantage of the Scout program.

Scouts are governed not only by their oath to do their best on their sacred honor, but also by their law which says that a Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous. A Scout is kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

Is there a boy anywhere who would not benefit by having these traits of character developed within him? Is there a home which would not be blessed by having such a boy within it, a boy who is helpful, trustworthy, loyal, friendly, and kind?

What if every boy was courteous to his mother? What if every boy was kind to little sister? What if every one was obedient in the home and obedient to God?

Would there be any moral breakdown, if all boys were clean? In this day of delinquency, can we think of any better way to prevent filthy living than to plant a love of cleanliness in the heart of a boy?

It is time to teach honor to America. It is time to acknowledge that an honest man is the noblest work of God. It is time to remember that when the grown-up sheep wander off from the fold, they usually lead the lambs astray.

May we awaken to our responsibility to be honest and true, to exalt honor in our lives and in our thinking, I earnestly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve has just concluded speaking.

Among our honored guests present this morning we are favored with Mr. Sumner G. Whittier, National Administrator of Veterans Affairs, Washington, D.C. He is accompanied by Dr. Albert H. Fechner, Manager of Veterans Administration Hospital here in our own city, and President W. Wallace McBride, who is manager of the Veterans Regional Office.

I am sure the audience would be pleased to meet Mr. Sumner Whittier. Would you please come forward. If you feel to condemn me, you blame it to Ezra Taft Benson. Just say a word to the audience.

MR. SUMNER G. WHITTIER

National Administrator of Veterans Affairs, Washington D. C.

Mr. President and all of those assembled here, I was sitting in this tremendous auditorium listening and

being inspired and all of a sudden I find myself at this platform. But I must say to you that coming in last night