

Have faith in the value of service and be willing to devote your time, talents, and gifts to the building of the kingdom and to the blessing of people.

Have faith to be honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men.

Have faith that God will bless and reward the faithful who love him and serve him in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

Have faith, my brothers and sisters, to do these things, walking always in

obedience to the commandments, doing those things that will please the Lord and lead you back into his presence, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We have just listened to Elder Delbert L. Stapley, a member of the Council of the Twelve. Bishop Carl W. Buehner will now speak to us. Brother Tuttle will come next.

BISHOP CARL W. BUEHNER

Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

Recently, I saw in a national magazine a cartoon depicting a master of ceremonies introducing the next person to take part on the program, and under the cartoon were these words: "Our next speaker will need all the introduction he can get." Now, brethren and sisters, I need all the help from above that I can get.

We have all been tremendously impressed by the spirit present in these conference sessions, also by the inspiring and uplifting talks of the Brethren.

I was moved when I learned that President McKay has given fifty-four years of valiant service in the leading councils of the Church and that President Joseph Fielding Smith has rendered fifty years of service as a member of the Council of the Twelve. Others have also given many years to the work of our Heavenly Father. I would like to submit meekly that this is my eighth anniversary as a member of the Presiding Bishopric of the Church. This has been a very rewarding experience and a great blessing in my life.

Our work with the Aaronic Priesthood has prompted me to say something concerning the origin and history of this priesthood through the ages.

We first came to know of the Aaronic Priesthood at the time Moses was leading the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. The Lord intended to have Israel as a nation enjoy the blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood. He made the following promise to them:

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant,

then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

"And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exodus 19:5-6.)

But Israel as a nation became wicked and rebellious and thus were not worthy to receive this blessing. While Moses was upon the mount for forty days receiving the law from the Lord, Israel was guilty of backsliding, returning to the worship of idols. When Moses returned and beheld them worshipping the golden calf, he in his anger threw down the tablets of stone, breaking them into pieces. The Lord later called Moses to return to the mount, instructing him to hew out other tablets of stone upon which he would write with his finger, but from the inspired version of the Bible, as given to us by the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord indicated there would be changes from what he had originally written because of Israel's forgetting their God. (Inspired Version. Exodus 34:1-2.) About this time the higher priesthood was taken from Israel as a nation, and a carnal or lesser law was given as punishment for their disobedience.

The Lord then commanded Moses to appoint and ordain Aaron and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazer, and Ithamar to receive the lesser priesthood. (Exodus 28:1.) Aaron and his sons were set apart to preside over the lesser priesthood, and this assignment became an inherited privilege to them and their posterity forever. (*Ibid.*, 28:43.) Nadab

Monday, April 4

Third Day

and Abihu soon forfeited this inheritance by usurping authority and were stricken dead before the congregation at the altar. Since they had no sons, there was no extension of this privilege to another generation in their families.

Until the ordination of Aaron and his sons, the first born male in each family of each tribe was considered as belonging to God and was thus ordained, but now the Lord called all the males of the tribe of Levi to assist Aaron and his sons in this priestly office. (Numbers 8:13-19.) It was the duty of Aaron and his sons to preside, but the Levites were limited in their duties to perform the ordinance of baptism, assisting in the offering of sacrifice and other duties coming under the lesser or carnal law. In addition they were assigned to care for the dismantling and setting up of the tabernacle as they moved about in the wilderness and to keep it in order. When Moses returned from the mount and found Israel worshipping the golden calf, it is rather significant to note that he stood at the gate of the camp and indicated that all those who were on the Lord's side should come to him. ". . . and all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him." (Exodus 32:26.)

The Aaronic Priesthood embraces the Aaronic and Levitical Priesthood. While Aaron and his sons were Levites, they presided in the Aaronic Priesthood, and the Levites who were not the sons of Aaron, held the Levitical Priesthood and served in a lesser capacity than did the sons of Aaron. The Aaronic Priesthood continued to function in this pattern until near the time of the birth of the Savior. The Jews at this time had drifted into almost total apostasy. No longer were the lineal descendants of Aaron permitted to preside in the temple. The presiding high priest was appointed by Herod the king and sometimes by Roman authority, according to personal desire, and they were deposed in the same manner. A good example of their method of operation comes from Zacharias who was a descendant of Aaron entitled to serve as the presiding high priest. While he was permitted to officiate in the temple, it was not in a presiding capacity. John the Baptist likewise should have been the presiding

priest in the temple because he was a direct descendant of Aaron through his father Zacharias and his mother Elisabeth, but the Jews rejected him. It should be understood that those who were called high priests by the apostate Jews were not high priests bearing the Melchizedek Priesthood. They should have been designated as presiding priests and not high priests.

John the Baptist was one of the most distinguished of God's servants. That he found favor with the Lord is emphasized in the Angel Gabriel's appearance in the temple to his father, Zacharias, promising him that he and his wife were to have a son who should ". . . be great in the sight of the Lord." (Luke 1:15.) The birth of few men has been foretold. He was one of this select group whose coming was made known centuries before his birth. Isaiah prophesied concerning his mission approximately seven-hundred years before he was born. (Isaiah 40:3.) He was an Elias in that he was a forerunner of Jesus. He vigorously preached the gospel of repentance to the Jews. There came to him one of the highest privileges ever accorded man—that of baptizing the Savior of the world. He was a personal witness of one of the greatest manifestations ever given. It came at the time of Jesus' baptism. As Jesus came forth out of the water, John beheld the Holy Ghost descend on him like a dove, and there came from the heavens the voice of the Father giving divine approval: ". . . This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17.)

Jesus attested to the fact that John the Baptist was one of the greatest of his servants. He paid him a glowing tribute when he said:

"For I say unto you, among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: . . ." (Luke 7:28.)

The Lord repeated in this dispensation the divine nature of John's mission:

"For he was baptized while he was yet in his childhood, and was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord be-

fore the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power." (D&C 84:28.)

John faithfully prepared the way for Jesus' mission. He was instrumental in overthrowing the kingdom of the Jews. While the decline of Judah as a nation began long before John's birth, it was further weakened during his ministry, and within three decades after his death it was no more. He stands with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph Smith as trusted and true servants to whom the Lord committed a dispensation of the gospel. He suffered death as a martyr and was beheaded through the trickery of the wicked Herodias. Like many of the servants of God, he sealed his testimony with his blood.

Little is known of the functions of the Aaronic Priesthood in the primitive church. The offices of deacon, teacher, and priest are named, but their duties are not clarified. (I Tim. 3:8; Eph. 4:11; Heb. 10:11.)

May 15, 1829, was a day of paramount importance to this generation. On that beautiful occasion, the Aaronic Priesthood was restored to earth after an absence of many centuries. It was the resurrected John the Baptist who was the central figure in this restoration. He it was who appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on the banks of the Susquehanna River as a messenger sent from God in answer to their prayers. He told them that he came under the direction of Peter, James, and John, and he conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood and the keys to this sacred power. His life and mission should be an inspiration to every bearer of the Aaronic Priesthood.

It is the hope of the Presiding Bishopric that not only each member of the Aaronic Priesthood but also each member of the Church will come to realize the greatness of Aaron, his sons, and their posterity, and John the Baptist, as men who have made a great contribution to the kingdom in their day.

Because the Aaronic Priesthood has been designated as the Lesser Priesthood does not lessen or diminish its sacredness. It is still the power of God. Its method of operation has been completely transformed in our day. From

the time of its institution in the days of Aaron and throughout the days of the primitive church in the Meridian of Time and again during the early period of the Church in this dispensation, only men were called to the offices of this priesthood. Before the turn of the last century, young men were gradually inducted into this program, and today it is chiefly a plan to give training to our young men twelve to twenty years of age. The training they receive today is a boon to the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is one of the primary objectives of the Presiding Bishopric to see that each young man shall receive this training. The members of the Aaronic Priesthood of today are the members of the Melchizedek Priesthood of tomorrow, and if they participate actively in the Aaronic Priesthood, they establish a solid foundation on which to build once they receive the higher priesthood. The advantages of today's Aaronic Priesthood program have never been equaled.

Between his 19th and 20th birthday, there are at least three important blessings that come to a young man who has honored his priesthood. First, he is recommended to be ordained an elder and to hold the high priesthood. Second, he will more than likely be invited to serve on a mission for the Church. This is a tremendous and important opportunity for every young man. Third, through his faithfulness to the Aaronic Priesthood and his ordination to the high priesthood, he will very likely have the opportunity of taking his bride into the house of the Lord and being sealed for time and eternity. These are only three of the important blessings that come through faithfulness in the Aaronic Priesthood.

I trust that I shall always be found assisting our young men in the Church, even as I was assisted by faithful brethren who presided over the Aaronic Priesthood when I was a boy. I recall very vividly a wonderful bishop by the name of Elias S. Woodruff, who twice became a mission president, who was a member of the general Church welfare committee, but whom I think was outstanding as a bishop and a leader of boys. I was one of his priests. At the time he was bishop, he presided over a very large ward. There were

Monday, April 4

Third Day

sixty-three priests in that priests' quorum. I recall Bishop Woodruff's coming into the room, taking off his coat, hanging it over the back of his chair, and then teaching this large group of youngsters the gospel. We all learned to love him. As I recall, more than fifty of those boys went on missions, and we had thirty-two missionaries from our ward in the mission field at the same time. Bishop Woodruff was an outstanding example of the devotion of a bishop to his Aaronic Priesthood quorums. I hope all bishops can learn from an example such as this.

May we as parents and leaders of our boys exert every effort to bring the full blessings of the priesthood to every one of them, to the end that the culmi-

nation of their Aaronic Priesthood activities will become a steppingstone to a great and marvelous future.

May the choice blessings of our Heavenly Father be with us in our efforts to serve him, I pray and leave my testimony, along with the wonderful testimonies that have already been given to the divinity of this great latter-day work, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom we have just listened is Bishop Carl W. Buehner, member of the Presiding Bishopric of the Church. Elder A. Theodore Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy will now speak to us.

ELDER A. THEODORE TUTTLE

Of the First Council of the Seventy

My dear brothers and sisters, since the assignment that came to me last week, has brought to a close fourteen years of intimate association with the LDS Department of Education (which has jurisdiction over the seminaries and the institutes of religion of this Church), I would like to share with you some of my reflections and experiences concerning this program.*

In retrospect, I see a young boy—a common variety of Latter-day Saint—sitting in a seminary class. The teacher wonders whether he is learning what is being taught. He need not have wondered, however, for two years later, and two thousand miles from home, he is being induced by his army companions to follow their actions in a decision that would have been detrimental to his moral virtue. I see this young man return home on furlough and go directly to the home of his seminary teacher to tell him how he had withstood the temptation and conclude with these words: "Pete, I couldn't let you down."

I see a young man in a seminary class who is having trouble at home with his father, trouble with his high school grades, and trouble in seminary. I see at the end of class a wise teacher chat with this young man, and in the process

of the conversation actually to ask forgiveness of this boy. I see him graduate from high school and college, go on a mission, marry in the temple, and then take his bride up to this small Idaho town, where he picks up the seminary teacher and drives down in front of the seminary. He then introduces his teacher to his bride in these words: "This is the place and this is the man who changed my life and gave you to me."

On another occasion I see a young couple away at a large university; their marriage falling apart, not because of any involvement on the part of either person, but because of the lack of funds, the urgency of studies, the children's needs, and a multitude of daily living problems that could not be met. As they cross the campus one evening, they stop in at the Institute of Religion, almost accidentally. I see the teacher, who normally is very meticulous about following his outline, depart from it, for some unknown reason and get on another subject, which somehow touched the hearts of this couple who were contemplating divorce. I see them happy now, their marriage mended and successful.

I hear a stake president stand in a large gathering and say: "All that I am, and the position that I have come to, I

*President Tuttle has been assigned to work in the missionary department of the Church.