

**President Hugh B. Brown:**

Bishop Robert L. Simpson of the Presiding Bishopric has just spoken to us. Our next speaker will be Bishop

Victor L. Brown, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church, he will be followed by Bishop Vandenberg.

**BISHOP VICTOR L. BROWN***Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric*

My dear brethren, I deem it a great honor to be invited by President McKay to speak to the body of the priesthood in this, the most widely attended priesthood meeting in the history of the Church. I feel the weight of such an assignment and solicit an interest in your faith and prayers that our Heavenly Father may bless us at this hour.

It is unlikely that there has ever been such a large gathering of holders of the Aaronic Priesthood in the history of the world, at least in this dispensation. And it is to you young men that I would like to address my remarks tonight. Each one of you who holds the Aaronic Priesthood has been given one of the greatest blessings that can come to mankind. It is so great that it has been bestowed on only a handful of men in the history of the world. You are members of that very small but select group who have been granted the privilege of acting with authority in the name of God. He has such confidence and trust in you that he has, through his servants, granted you permission to use his name. Now, I ask you, who in the entire world do you have such trust in that you would be willing to let them use your name almost at will? This, then, is an honor of the greatest magnitude, this priesthood which has been bestowed upon each of you young men.

It is an established principle that with the acceptance of a great honor, one also accepts the responsibility that goes with it. Daniel Webster said, "The most important thought I ever had was that of my individual responsibility to God." Lacordaire said, "Duty is the grandest of ideas because it implies the idea of God, of the soul, of liberty, of responsibility, of immortality."

It is about our responsibility and duty to God, as holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, that I wish to speak this evening. We all know that it is the

duty of the deacon, among other things, to pass the Sacrament and collect fast offerings; of the teacher to prepare the Sacrament and to assist in ward teaching; and of the priest, to administer to the Sacrament and to perform baptisms.

As important as these duties are, it is not my intention to elaborate on them, but rather to discuss the personal and intimate responsibilities which each of us has with our Heavenly Father, the responsibility of being the kind of person he would like us to be. Someone has said that character is what you are when you are alone with yourself in the dark. Emerson said, "It is easy to live after the world's opinion. It is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd, keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

There are many influences in the world today which are undermining the character of men. It often seems that it is the smart thing to get as much as we can for as little effort as possible. More and more for less and less seems to be the popular chant. There is a feeling that if you do something wrong and get away with it and do not get caught, it is all right.

There is a trend in some areas of society today toward intellectual dishonesty. You will recall newspaper accounts of the exposé in the field of higher education where university students paid someone else to take their examinations and then accepted their diplomas as though they had earned them. You will remember the television quiz-show scandals. A survey was made after this exposé, and an alarming number of those asked if it were wrong to mislead the public, felt there was nothing wrong with it whatsoever. In some areas of our society, winning for winning's sake seems a prime factor. These are but a few of

Saturday, April 7

Second Day

the character-destroying influences in the world today.

Now, what is our position as holders of the Aaronic Priesthood? Where do we stand on these and other moral issues? Are we men of honor? If so, what kind of young men are we, really? Let me outline for you some of the traits of character which are basic if we are to justify the trust the Lord has placed in us. The list is long, but here are a few:

Truthfulness, honesty, integrity, dependability, industry, and courtesy.

Of truthfulness, Jacob taught: "Woe unto the liar, for he shall be thrust down to hell." (2 Nephi 9:34.) Oliver Wendell Holmes had this to say: "Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all." In the Psalm of David, he says: "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." (Psalm 101:7.) In Proverbs we read: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight." (Proverbs 12:22.)

Truthfulness is in very deed one of the foundation stones of true character. Without it, a holder of the priesthood not only breaks his trust with the Lord, but he deceives himself and his fellow men.

Laveter had this to say about honesty: "He who purposely cheats his friend would cheat his God." In a recent editorial in the Church Section of the *Deseret News-Salt Lake Telegram*, we read the following:

"In the magnificent prayer of the Savior, as recorded in the Gospel of John, the Lord is quoted as having said to His Father: 'And this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.' [John 17:3.]

"John evidently had the same thing in mind when he wrote in his first general epistle: 'And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' [1 John 2:3-4.]

"If the achievement of life eternal means to know God, and if to know him means that we must keep his command-

ments, then certainly every one of us must be honest, true, virtuous, and chaste, and seek after every good thing.

"The wave of dishonesty which is sweeping the world is frightening indeed. How can the world be saved in dishonesty? How can it continue to justify itself in fraud and cheating and lying? And yet it attempts to do so.

"The air lines of the United States recently announced that they must discontinue their so-called youth fares (reduced particularly for those of high school and college age) because of fraudulent misuse on the part of many young people.

"Shoplifting, which involves women and children for the most part, now runs into more than thirty million dollars a year.

"Sixty-five percent of the students in one high school reported that they cheat and can see no wrong in it.

"Three quarters of a million special officers are employed in the United States to watch employees in large firms to attempt to prevent dishonest practices. That number is twice as many as all the state and local police in the nation.

"In one American city, police arrested 2,226 shoplifters in six months and recovered nearly \$70,000 worth of stolen merchandise. Half of these shoplifters were children. Most of the others were housewives."

And the article goes on to say:

"Dishonesty is one of the signs of a great let down in the moral fibre of the nation. It is also a sign—a dreadful one—that many men and women and boys and girls no longer regard their Christian religion as a way of life, but rather as something to be ignored, or at most to be used in intellectual exercise only.

"Honesty must not be considered as a policy only, although it is all of that. It must be regarded as a principle of life, part and parcel of the daily conduct of each individual.

"If we are to consider ourselves as followers of the Christ, we must do as the Savior says—keep his commandments.

"How often must he tell us: Thou shalt not lie?"

"How frequently must he say: Thou shalt not steal?"

"Will we soon forget that we must not bear false witness—in anything? Not in making a sale, nor in representing values, nor in telling the ages of our children, nor in using other people's property?"

"Without honesty, there is no integrity."

"Without integrity there is no character."

"Without character there is no godliness."

"Without godliness there is no salvation in the kingdom of God."

"As Latter-day Saints, we live in the world, but as was the case with the ancient Saints, we need not be of the world, nor partake of the sins and blemishes of Babylon."

"Zion is the pure in heart. If we are to be a part of Zion, then let us be as honest and true as God expects us to be."

"Hereby do we know that we know him: if we keep his commandments."

End of quote.

Now, I ask you young priesthood bearers: Can you in any way be dishonest without breaking this great trust the Lord has placed in you? The answer is obviously no.

Now, as to integrity: Integrity is that great quality of the soul that embodies both honesty and truthfulness.

Simon said this of integrity. "Integrity is the first step to true greatness. Men love to praise, but are slow to practice it. To maintain it in high places costs self-denial. In all places it is liable to opposition, but its end is glorious, and the universe will yet do it homage."

Add to truthfulness, honesty and integrity—dependability—that quality where one's word is as good as his bond. What a wonderful thing it would be for every young man to say to his bishop that he would do something for him and then do it. The man who is not dependable is of little worth, no matter what his talents might be.

And what of industry? Cumberland has said, "It is better to wear out than rust out." And we gain this from Ruskin: "Though you may have known clever men who were indolent, you never

have known a great man who was so."

When I hear a young man spoken of as giving promise of great genius, the first question I ask about him always is: "Does he work?"

Lucy E. Keller tells this story:

"'Auntie,' said a gentleman who had just learned that the youngest son of his colored cook, had been appointed stenographer to a large manufacturer, 'tell me how you have brought up your children so that each one of them has become so good and useful a man.' 'Oh, honey,' was the reply, 'that's nothing. I hadn't no education, and I could only teach them three things. Just three things I taught them was their prayers and their manners and to work.'"

Now, at last, courtesy—that quality of character which speaks of refinement, of thoughtfulness, of consideration, of kindness and love, the little things which President McKay has so often reminded us of—"thank you," "if you please," "I beg your pardon." Courtesy, which is consideration for others, is a true mark of a gentleman.

Now, young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, what is your position as holders of the Aaronic Priesthood? Are you men of honor? Is the trust the Lord has placed in you justified? These principles we have discussed are just a few of the many that go to make up the foundation of character. If we truly love the Lord, we will make them a part of our lives.

I want to bear you my testimony that the President of all the priesthood in the world is a prophet of the Living God. I know this with all my heart; my Heavenly Father has made it known to me, no one else. I am so grateful for the wonderful blessing that has come to me to be under his influence, the greatest blessing that has come in my life. His life embodies all of these virtues we have been talking about and many more. He is the most wonderful man in this world today. He is so human, so kind, so thoughtful, and he has such a wonderful sense of humor. I am sure he will forgive me if I just tell you one short story. After giving a report to the First Presidency on a rather unpleasant problem we were experiencing, President McKay's response was this:

"Well, I guess a dog's got to have a few fleas or he wouldn't know he was a dog."

May the Lord bless you, may you honor your priesthood, may you keep your trust with your Heavenly Father, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President Hugh B. Brown:**

We have just listened to Bishop Victor L. Brown of the Presiding Bishopric. We shall be glad to hear from the Presiding Bishop of the Church, Bishop John H. Vandenberg.

## BISHOP JOHN H. VANDENBERG

*Presiding Bishop of the Church*

My dear brethren, it is an honor to meet with you tonight in this great assembly of the priesthood of the Church. I am very grateful for my two great counselors who have helped me so much in this new assignment that has come to me.

Sometime ago a letter came to my desk written by a woman investigator which carried with it a great deal of enthusiasm and testimony, and I would like to share with you tonight the following excerpts from this letter. Her salutation was this:

"My dearest Father Bishopric:

"You are going to be rather surprised to hear from me, but I attended Sunday services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today and was so inspired. . . .

"I owe my gratitude to just about the finest, well-cultured, and intellectual gentlemen. . . . They graciously invited themselves into my home and explained the Mormons. . . . I just had to go to Church with them on the following Sunday. The book on how Joseph Smith tells his own story was so outstanding, with great love of God for each and every human being, that my knowledge of religion certainly broadened just by meeting these two elders. . . .

"On entering the Church I was so astonished to see how many young people of today are attending church, and especially thrilled to see how the young mothers bring their lovely children. . . . The thing that touched me deeply is how the elders or brothers were so anxious just to be able to say, 'How do you do.' . . . This is something you don't see in other churches. . . .

"The Aaronic Priesthood conducted

the Sacrament . . . which was so pure with delight followed by the separation to classes. At this time the elders led me to the adult class. . . . Here is where I accumulated knowledge in one half hour that I did not know in a lifetime of fifty years. . . .

"I also enjoyed the opening prayer . . . which put a dent in my mind that these are a group of people that have to be made more known in our United States of America. . . .

"Again I say how happy I was to attend services in your Mormon Latter-day Saint Church, and how mighty proud the mission must be of the elders. They are an inspiration that many mothers and fathers today can learn the message from God to his children to make this a better world to live in like God intended it to be."

As I read this thrilling letter, I thought what a great blessing to the elders' parents and to those missionaries, although they are unaware of the great spiritual lift that they gave to this woman. As the woman stated, "I owe my gratitude to just about the finest, well-cultured, and intellectual gentlemen." I wondered what greater honor could there be than to be so highly esteemed by one's neighbors. No doubt this experience is happening time and time again the world over.

Then to think that these missionaries came from the ranks of the Aaronic Priesthood, having faithfully served until they became eligible to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood and called to the ministry of the Savior. One cannot help feeling the warmth of the Spirit as he contemplates the great Aaronic Priesthood work of this Church.

Tonight I cannot help thinking of more than 237,000 living men and boys