

BISHOP JOHN H. VANDENBERG

Presiding Bishop of the Church

The Bible states that our Savior Jesus Christ “. . . gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14.) The members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are known throughout the world as a peculiar people.

We are considered a peculiar people because of our Word of Wisdom—the great youth program, the welfare program, the priesthood, and because of our belief in God—that he is a personal God and is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that he speaks to his prophets today as he did anciently. We are peculiar because we not only claim but furnish evidence to all people that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth in these latter days. We believe that the same organization that existed in the primitive church of apostles, prophets, bishops, teachers, elders, and seventies, has been restored by direct revelation. It is the duty of those called as apostles “. . . to ordain and set in order all the other officers of the church, . . .” (D&C 107:58.)

“The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, . . . to build up the Church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, . . .” (*Ibid.*, 107:33.) The Twelve travel throughout the world and under the influence of the Spirit ordain bishops to be “stewards of God.”

In connection with the duties of the apostles, I would like to relate an apocryphal story from the writings of Clement of Alexandria:

“. . . about John the Apostle, handed down and preserved in memory. When, on the death of the tyrant, he (John) passed over to Ephesus from the Island of Patmos, he used to make missionary journeys also to neighboring gentile cities, in some places to appoint bishops, and in some to set in order whole churches and . . . to appoint one of

those indicated by the Spirit. On his arrival then at one of the cities at no great distance, of which some even mention the name, . . . he saw a youth of stalwart frame and winning countenance, and impetuous spirit, and said to the bishop, ‘I entrust to thee this youth with all earnestness, calling Christ and the Church to witness.’ The bishop accepted the trust, and made all the requisite promises, and the apostle renewed his injunction and adjuration. He then returned to Ephesus, and the elder taking home with him the youth who had been entrusted to his care, maintained, cherished, and finally baptized him. After this he abandoned further care and protection of him, considering that he had affixed to him the seal of the Lord as a perfect amulet against evil. Thus prematurely neglected, the youth was corrupted by certain idle companions of his own age, who were familiar with evil, and who first led him astray by many costly banquets, and then took him out by night with them to share in their felonious proceedings, finally demanding his cooperation in some worse crime. First familiarized with guilt, and then, from the force of his character, starting aside from the straight path like some mighty steed that seizes the bit between its teeth; he rushed towards headlong ruin, and utterly abandoning the divine salvation, gathered his worst comrades around him, and became a most violent, bloodstained, and reckless bandit-chief. Not long afterwards John was recalled to the city, and after putting other things in order said, ‘Come now, O bishop, restore to me the deposit which I and the Saviour entrusted to thee, with the witness of the Church over which thou dost preside.’ At first the bishop in his alarm mistook the meaning of the metaphor, but the apostle said, ‘I demand back the young man and the soul of the brother.’ Then groaning from the depth of his heart and shedding tears, ‘He is dead,’ said the bishop. ‘How and by what death?’ ‘He is dead to God! For

Saturday, October 5

Second Day

he has turned out wicked and desperate, and, to sum up all, a brigand; and now, instead of the Church he has seized the mountain, with followers like himself.' Then the apostle, rending his robe and beating his head, with loud wailing said, 'A fine guardian of our brother's soul did I leave! Give me a horse and a guide.' Instantly, . . . he rode away . . . from the Church and arriving at the brigands' outposts, was captured without flight or resistance, but crying, 'For this I have come. Lead me to your chief.' The chief awaited him in his armour, but when he recognized John as he approached, he was struck with shame and turned to fly [flight]. But John pursued him as fast as he could, forgetful of his age, crying out, 'Why my son, dost thou fly [flee] from thine own father, unarmed, aged as he is? Pity me, . . . fear not . . . stay! believe! Christ sent me.' But he on hearing these words first stood with downcast gaze, then flung away his arms, then trembling, began to weep bitterly, and embraced the old man when he came up to him, pleading with his groans, . . . but the apostle pledging himself . . . led him back to the Church and praying for him . . . and wrestling with him in earnest fastings . . . did not depart, as they say, till he restored him to the bosom of the Church." (St. Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Divinitus Salv.*, chapter 42.)

In Zion today are apostles like John who have been divinely called to minister the affairs of the kingdom of God in all the world. The Lord has through this apostolic ministry appointed bishops in all stakes of Zion. The charge, "I entrust to thee this youth," which John gave to the bishop is one of the foremost responsibilities of the office and calling of a bishop—to care for the youth. Peculiar to this Church is the authority by which it acts, the priesthood of God. This priesthood or authority to act in the name of God was restored to the earth by direct revelation. The higher priesthood is known as the Melchizedek Priesthood and ". . . continueth in the church of God in all generations, and is without beginning of days or end of years." (D&C 84:17.) Along

with the Melchizedek Priesthood, ". . . the Lord confirmed a priesthood also upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations, which priesthood also continueth and abideth forever with the priesthood which is after the holiest order of God." (*Ibid.*, 84:18.) Thus there are two divisions of the priesthood, "namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical." (*Ibid.*, 107:1.)

An unusual promise is given in connection with the priesthood. The Lord said: "For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods (or divisions) of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

"They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the Church and kingdom, and the elect of God." (*Ibid.*, 84:33-34.) It is therefore incumbent upon every eligible male member of the Church to live worthy to receive the priesthood.

The Lord in his great wisdom has placed the priesthood under two divisions, as indicated, the Melchizedek and the Aaronic. Perfection, however, does not come through the Aaronic Priesthood because this priesthood ". . . holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel"; (*Ibid.*, 84:26) and is a schooling ministry to prepare the holders thereof for the greater or Melchizedek Priesthood.

The Lord offers the male youth of the Church, twelve years and older who are worthy and eligible, the great privilege of officiating in his work by being ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood. Here they learn the governing principles of the kingdom of God. Through voluntary service in the outward ordinances of the Church, they gain a spiritual stability that can come to them in no other way.

It is the Lord's desire that all should come unto him. "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.) There is only one way, as the Bible states, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Eph. 4:5.)

The Lord knows the dangers that

can beset youth without a spiritual guide—just like the youth that John rescued who had been neglected! Worthy young men in the Church have the Aaronic Priesthood conferred upon them. Thus each has the advantage of spiritual growth as he is presided over by a bishop. The bishop is, by revelation, president of the Aaronic Priesthood and president of the priests quorum. Thus the bishop of a ward is the spiritual guardian of the youth. He does not, however, replace the parents in their responsibility to teach, guide, persuade, and discipline their own children. It is the responsibility of parents to develop within their children certain spiritual values such as humility, repentance, a feeling of responsibility, and love for their fellow men. The example of parents, undoubtedly, imposes the greatest influence upon their children. This influence must be for good if parents are to be successful.

The most recent statistics from the FBI indicate an increase in crime as reported in 1962. Approximately fifty percent of all major crimes are committed by young people under the age of eighteen. The school drop-out problem seems acute and more prevalent today. Dr. William Hutchinson says: "For the most part school drop-outs were first church drop-outs. He is a drop-out from his family, . . . drop-out from society. . . . I recognize, . . . that the most important single force in our society is the family. I would first suggest that we prepare our young people to be good parents. Too many of those that I see are weak, immature parents. After dealing with many teen-agers, I have received the impression that adolescent youth is not looking ahead to parenthood. Teen-agers too often think of their father and mother as 'poor Dad' and 'poor Mom' in a condescending way. Their thinking is not oriented ahead with proud anticipation of stepping into the role of a family leader.

"Among parents I see a great many looking back with nostalgia to their youth and trying to relive the 'glorious teens' vicariously through their children.

"The family used to be bound together by economic glue. Historically, the family worked together as a team on the hunt or in the field. It was an essential to existence itself that there be discipline and leadership within the family."

I would also like to read a letter written by a father to his son. The son had been confined in a youth detention home. The father upon learning about his son's confinement went immediately to the detention facilities. Upon seeing his son, the father commenced shouting indignantly, informing his son that he was no good, a disgrace. The boy reacted by forcing shut the door. As the father returned home, he was unable to sleep. He spent the night pondering over the circumstances causing the failure of his son. As a result, he wrote this letter:

"Dear Son, Maybe you won't understand all this. It certainly isn't clear to me yet. All I know is that when you sent me away yesterday I was glad. I thought I was finally rid of a big problem. I was wrong. Son, I have been wrong about you for a long time. I decided to forget you, but I couldn't. The more I tried, the more I thought about you. I prayed for help, but it seemed to do no good. In fact, my thoughts only became more centered around you, like a snowball rolling down hill.

"I don't blame you Son for sending me away. You weren't sending away your dad, only a guy who was always mad at you. When I overcame my drinking problem, I went to all those I had hurt and asked their forgiveness. I never thought to go to you. I should have. I know now that you were one of those I had hurt the most.

"When you needed another chance, I never really gave it to you. Just sat around knowing you would fail and waiting for it to happen. Now I'm asking you for another chance. Not with me setting the terms. Just for the chance to work with you to try to overcome the wrongs done. Hopefully, Dad."

This letter would never have been written if the father had been the spirit-

Saturday, October 5

Second Day

ual influence in his home that God intended him to be. The boy would never have harbored contempt for his father if their home had been spiritually strong. One might assume that the statistics of broken homes and shattered dreams would be sufficient to compel all people to correct the illusion that they are self-sufficient and have no need of God.

Thomas J. Cahill, chief of the San Francisco Police Department, makes the following observation: ". . . I say to you that the home is a place where the child must be taught from the cradle. Love, understanding, and kindness is something that is built into his heart or her heart as they grow, and it must be done by both the father and the mother carrying out their responsibilities; because when God gives them children or gives us children, he also places upon our shoulders corresponding responsibilities and obligations to see to it that those children are brought up in the proper way. . . ."

I must add that the only proper way is God's way. Spiritual discipline is the most effective means of character development. The influence of the priesthood in the home has the greatest influence for guiding and persuading young people along the path of righteousness. One of the fundamental teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that every member should acquire learning by study, by faith, by prayer and by seeking learning wherever it is found. We believe that, "The glory of God is intelligence, . . ." (D&C 93:36.) "And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come." (*Ibid.*, 130:19.)

This would suggest that spiritual guidance in the home gives the youth not only an advantage in this life but also in the eternity. In addition to the influence in the home, the bishop gives them guidance in the government of the kingdom and in the priesthood of God. In this respect, he is in metaphor, a potter and sculptor of the youth.

The ward bishop cultivates the pure

love of Christ in the souls of the youth. His labors inspire hope, and his kindness builds faith. This is today's spiritual challenge to establish faith, hope, and the pure love of Christ, which is charity, (see Moroni 7:47) into the hearts of the young people. Paul declares that these three abideth (see 1 Cor. 13:13) though the image and fashion of the world pass away. It is the precious youth of the Church who must accept this challenge. It is the bishop, as overseer in the household of God, who holds the torch of leadership. The bishop is indeed a true and good shepherd.

It is in the early period of life that youth needs to be cared for, maintained, and cherished. This is the formative period of life. Mr. Vaughn in 1783 wrote to Benjamin Franklin, "Influence upon the private character late in life is not only influence late in life but a weak influence.

"It is in youth that we plant our chief habits and prejudices; it is in youth that we take our party, as to profession, pursuits and matrimony. In youth, therefore, the turn is given, in youth the education even of the next generation is given, in youth the private and public character is determined, and the term of life extending but from youth to age, life ought to begin well from youth, and more especially before we take our party to our principal objects."

No young man can receive the priesthood and participate therein without becoming a better person. The priesthood is character building. It teaches one to have proper concepts and values. As one magnifies his duties in the priesthood, he experiences the challenge and growth that emanate from eternal principles. This challenge prompted the inspired words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness." (D&C 121:36.)

In the business affairs of life, it is the application of advantages that con-

tributes to success. If one has the advantage of added training in a certain field or the advantage of more economical production of a product, he usually becomes more successful in his business effort. So it is with the youth. The priesthood of God gives them an advantage for success and happiness and eternal life.

Here we have reason for Peter's declaration: ". . . ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet. 2:9.) In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Bishop John H. Vandenberg of the Presiding Bishopric has just spoken to us.

Following a brief organ interlude the Tabernacle Choir and the congregation will sing, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," with Richard P. Condie conducting and Dr. Alexander Schreiner at the organ.

The Choir and congregation joined in singing the hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

President David O. McKay:

When the Saints first sang, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," those who spoke from this pulpit spoke only to those who were sitting in the audience in the Tabernacle. As apparent to all this program has been given to the millions outside, as well as to you here in the Tabernacle.

We shall now hear from Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Twelve.

ELDER ALVIN R. DYER

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

It is always a great spiritual uplift to attend the conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I am grateful with you, my brethren and sisters, once again to have this privilege.

President McKay's great message yesterday, which went straight to the heart of the individual, gives encouragement to the remarks that I thought to make about honesty. The great need of the world is for spiritual quality in men, for depth and altitude of soul, for wealth of inward life, out of which good deeds shall come like a stream from the mountains, with power. But this nobility of character is not arrived at in a day. Its source lies far back in the days of youth, in the practices of restraint and the acquisition of honest thoughts and good habits.

We believe in being honest!

Through the efforts of the American Bar Association and Presidential Proclamation, we now have a new day in America. It comes every first of May and is referred to as "Law Day." Efforts are being made to popularize this day by many national organizations of

which the following are but a few: The American Heritage Foundation, The United States Conference of Mayors, and The General Federation. The need for such a day to be brought to the attention of America stems from the apparent complacency with regard to the rule of law, devotion to morality, and moral honesty.

In recent weeks, as reported in our newspapers, J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, based upon statistics compiled by this bureau, stated among other things "that since 1950 the crime rate in America has increased four times as fast as our population. For every dollar our churches cost us, our crime is costing us 12 dollars. Bank robberies and fraud have increased with leaps and bounds." In viewing this appalling situation there are those who say, "Such crimes are committed by the professional criminal, and we will always have them." But, truly, are such deviations into crime and dishonesty expanding only in the so-called ranks of the professional criminal?

In an article appearing in the *Reader's*