

## Bishop Victor L. Brown

### *Of the Presiding Bishopric*

My dear brethren: I am deeply grateful to be with you in this great priesthood meeting of the Church. I pray that my remarks will be in harmony with the Spirit of the Lord. With his help I will attempt to explore with you some of the responsibilities we priesthood holders have by virtue of the fact that we have been ordained by proper authority to act officially in the name of God. This applies to twelve-year-old deacons as well as to high priests.

#### **Who we are**

First, we should understand who we are. Before we were born, our spirits dwelt in heaven with our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, who is our elder brother. We were faithful to him during that period of our existence. Had we not been faithful, we would have followed Satan as did one-third of the hosts of heaven. This would have prevented our coming to this earth as mortal beings, which was necessary if we were ultimately to attain eternal life and return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. We were faithful, and we are here in mortality with all the potentiality of exaltation.

One of the basic principles upon which his plan was based was free agency. We had our free agency in heaven and made the right choices. As mortal beings now, we also have our free agency. We may choose whom we will follow, either Satan or the Savior. "Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life." (2 Ne. 10:23.)

#### **Our mortal environment**

Our mortal environment and its influences upon us may be somewhat different from those of our premortal

existence. Nevertheless, there were positive and negative influences in the spirit world. If it were not so, why would one-third of our spiritual brothers and sisters have followed Satan into captivity? The alternatives available to us in this life are the same as they were before. It is either Jesus Christ and eternal life or Satan and bondage. Here is what we find in the scriptures regarding this subject:

" . . . they who keep their first estate [which includes all of us] shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate [those who followed Satan] shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate [this life] shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever." (Abr. 3:26.)

#### **Created in God's image**

Being sons of God, we were created in his image. In other words, our physical appearance is similar to his, just as it is to our earthly father. Recognizing, then, that we are literally spiritual sons of our Father in heaven— ". . . And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men . . . for in heaven created I them" (Moses 3:5)—and recognizing that we are created in his image, that this human form of flesh and bone is the tabernacle for our spirits in this mortal life, that we had the wisdom to make proper choices in the life before this, and further that we who are present in this priesthood meeting have the authority to act in his name and officiate in his holy ordinances here among men—recognizing all of this, it should not be difficult to catch the vision of the responsibilities associated with such blessings, responsibilities far and beyond those held by those who do not hold the priesthood.

### Examples of true manhood

Let us consider just a few of these responsibilities. In the scriptures we read, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Gen. 1:27.) The Lord defined some very basic differences between men and women. He gave the male what we call masculine traits and the female feminine traits. He did not intend either of the sexes to adopt the other's traits but, rather, that men should look and act like men and that women should look and act like women. When these differences are ignored, an unwholesome relationship develops, which, if not checked, can lead to the reprehensible, tragic sin of homosexuality. In other words, we have a responsibility as priesthood bearers to be examples of true manhood.

### Command to be fruitful

The Lord commanded men and women to multiply and replenish the earth. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen. 1:28.) To insure that this would take place, he gave to each a powerful emotion which causes a male and female to be attracted to each other. To man he gave a mind with which to reason so that he might have dominion over "every living thing that moveth upon the earth." With this mind he also expects man to have dominion over himself. He expects man to exercise control over his sexual drives.

### "Thou shalt not commit adultery"

Sexual activity is to be indulged in only within the bonds of marriage. When this is the case, it is one of the most rewarding and satisfying ex-

periences man can have. When this is not the case, the same experience becomes base and evil. Notwithstanding the attitude of much of the world toward sexual permissiveness, the Lord has never changed his commandment in this regard. He said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Exod. 20:14.)

Infidelity and promiscuous sex activity destroy the basic, vital institution of the family, which in turn destroys all that is good in life. If we as priesthood holders are to bring honor to that priesthood, we will refrain from any sexual activity outside the bonds of matrimony. Otherwise, we bring disgrace to ourselves and to the priesthood we bear.

Acknowledging the fact that this mortal body is the tabernacle of the spirit and that the spirit was fathered by our Father in heaven, it behooves us to show respect for our bodies by not abusing them through the use of harmful and destructive substances. Here again, one who holds the priesthood has a responsibility far greater than one who does not, a responsibility to abstain completely from the use of such things as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.

### Principle of honesty

We have been discussing matters which may be classed primarily as moral. Morality, however, is not limited to the question of sex or drugs. It is much broader in its scope. I should like now to branch into another phase of morality. Three statements by President David O. McKay very forcefully introduce this vitally important moral principle:

"Honesty and sincerity are the basic virtues of a noble character." ("We Believe," *Improvement Era*, September 1963, p. 803.)

"Honesty . . . is the first virtue mentioned in the Thirteenth Article of Faith. It is founded on the first principles of human society and is the foundation principle of moral

manhood." (*Treasures of Life* [Deseret Book Co., 1965], p. 455.)

"It is impossible to associate manhood with dishonesty. To be just with one's self, one must be honest with one's self and with others. This means honesty in speech as well as in actions. It means to avoid telling half-truths as well as untruths. It means that we are honest in our dealings—in our buying as well as in our selling. It means that an honest debt can never be outlawed, and that a man's word is better than his bond. It means that we will be honest in our dealings with the Lord, for 'true honesty takes into account the claims of God as well as those of man; it renders to God the things that are God's, as well as to man the things that are man's.'" (*Conference Report*, April 1968, pp. 7-8.)

### Reputation of Mormons

Some time ago I had occasion to visit with a man from New York City. He has been in the field of finance for many years. His associates are nationwide. During the course of our conversation, he made a remark that has given me much food for thought. He said: "Over the years, I have had dealings with many Mormons. I have yet to run into a dishonest one."

I countered by saying, "If a Mormon truly lives his religion, he must be honest." However, I indicated that I was afraid there were some who did not live their religion fully, whereupon he replied, "I hope I never have the shattering experience of meeting a dishonest Mormon."

I had almost forgotten this conversation until the other day when I visited with another financier from New York City. We were discussing a rather negative article published recently about Salt Lake City and the Mormons and some of the feelings against the Church in earlier years. He said, "That may have been true in the past, but now it is a point of distinction to be known as a Mor-

mon," inferring that being a member of the Church is now considered worthy of great respect.

### Conduct of young men

Within the next three or four months, over four hundred young men holding the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood will be going to Hawaii for employment in the pineapple fields. I am quite sure none of them solicited this job. How, then, did they obtain it? Last year some of our young men found employment with this same firm. Their conduct and performance were so outstanding, the company this year wants four hundred of the same kind. I hope these four hundred young men are present in this priesthood meeting. Each one carries the reputation of the holy priesthood on his shoulders. If they honor their priesthood, they will be honest in all their dealings. They will be men of integrity, totally dependable. If they do this, they will bring honor to themselves, their families, their church, and their God. Certainly their Father in heaven will be proud to acknowledge them as his sons.

### Graduates of BYU

I am told that currently recruiters for major national corporations rank the Master of Business Administration graduates from the Brigham Young University with those from the top four or five business schools in the nation, not because of their academic prowess alone but because of the kind of men they are, men of honesty and integrity.

You may ask what all of this has to do with the responsibility of a priesthood holder. My answer is, Everything. The Lord has said, "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." (Ps. 101:7.)

### Distinguished for zeal

Alma, speaking of the people of Ammon, said, "And they were among

the people of Nephi, and also numbered among the people who were of the church of God. And they were also distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end." (Al. 27:27.)

The dictionary says integrity implies trustworthiness and incorruptibility to a degree that one is incapable of being false to trust, responsibility, or pledge. Honesty implies a refusal to lie, steal, or deceive in any way.

### Counsel of Joseph F. Smith

President Joseph F. Smith, in writings to the membership of the Church, summarizes the message I have tried to give tonight:

"Then we have a mission in the world: each man, each woman, each child who has grown to understanding or to the years of accountability, ought to be an example to the world. They ought not only to be qualified to preach the truth, to bear testimony of the truth, but ought to live so that the very life they live, the very words they speak, their every action in life will be a sermon to the unwary and to the ignorant, teaching them goodness, purity, uprightness, faith in God and love for the human family."

"Let every man's life be so that his character will bear the closest inspection, and that it may be seen as an open book, so that he will have nothing to shrink from or be ashamed of. Let all men who are elevated to positions of trust in the Church live so that no man can point to their faults, because they will have no faults; so that no man can justly accuse them of wrongdoing, because they do no wrong; that no man can point out their defects as 'human' and as 'weak mortals,' because they are living up to the principles of the gos-

pel, and are not merely 'weak human creatures,' devoid of the Spirit of God and the power to live above sin. That is the way for all men to live in the kingdom of God."

"The first and highest standard of correct living is to be found in that individual responsibility which keeps men good for the truth's sake. It is not difficult for men who are true to themselves to be true to others. Men who honor God in their private lives do not need the restraint of public opinion which may not only be indifferent, but positively wrong."

"No member in good standing in the Church will be drunken or riotous or profane or will take advantage of his brother or his neighbor, or will violate the principles of virtue and honor and righteousness." (*Gospel Doctrine* [Deseret Book Co., 1968], pp. 251-53.)

Brethren, as sons of God holding his holy priesthood, we have an obligation to bring honor to his name. We are his emissaries in the world. He has shown unbounded love for us through the blessing of the priesthood and through having given his life that we might have eternal life. In return for all of these blessings, he has said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15.) That we may do this more perfectly each day I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

### President Harold B. Lee

Besides the Teacher Development and the Library programs, we have now given to the Church the genius of leadership training, and on the team that has been preparing and has worked on this leadership training program has been Elder Wendell J. Ashton. We will ask Brother Ashton now to speak to us.