

ELDER RULON S. WELLS

(Of the First Council of Seventy)

When I look out over this vast congregation of men and women, I am deeply impressed with the benefits, as well as the obligations, that come to us by reason of that wonderful association which we have with one another. I am also led to reflect that with every association that we form there will come certain obligations and we may derive certain benefits. When our father Adam was placed in the garden of Eden, he was there alone. He formed no association with other men, for there were none, but he stood alone. Under conditions of that kind, isolated as he was, it became his solemn duty to make of himself a splendid and suitable companion. This everyone can do when he becomes isolated, by the development of holy meditation, by keeping himself clean and unspotted from sin, by being worthy, by taking proper care of himself, both bodily and spiritually. But the Lord saw that it was not good for man to be alone and he gave Eve unto Adam to be his wife, and thus a new association was formed, and with that association came additional benefits and likewise additional obligations, the obligation of husband to wife and wife to husband. When children came, a new and enlarged association was formed and with it came the additional benefits of the family organization, and also the obligation of father and mother to their children and the obligations of the children to their father and to their mother. It is then incumbent upon all who form this family association that they shall discharge with fidelity the obligations resting upon them in order that they may receive the benefits that come by reason of it.

So it is with every association that we form and there are many of them. There are business associations, co-partnerships, joint stock institutions, and whenever such associations are formed they likewise have their obligations and benefits, and it becomes incumbent upon all to discharge, with fidelity and with honor, those obligations and thereby reap the benefits. Human beings, essentially social in their nature, continue to enlarge the scope of their association and form themselves into civil governments. All nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples together with their subdivisions into states, counties, municipalities constitute such associations, some better than others, because they are better governed or organized under better laws than others, but responsibilities and obligations come to each member of such association commensurate with the amount of power or influence that the individual member of that association exercises and can or is permitted to exercise for the benefit of those with whom he is associated.

In a despotism, an absolute monarchy, where the king rules, and the people only submit, great is the obligation of the king, but the individual citizen's obligation is correspondingly less. In our own government, where the people rule, each individual citizen is a ruler in the

nation and great is his responsibility; great are the obligations that rest upon him by reason of that citizenship, for he himself is a ruler, a sovereign, and helps to form and fashion the government of which he is one of its rulers. If we have good government it is because the individual citizens are good. If we have a bad government it is because the individual citizens are bad. That applies not only to the nation at large, but to the state, to the county and to the city.

In this great republic, where all just powers are derived from the consent of the governed, how great is the responsibility of the individual citizen. How we ought to discharge, with fidelity, the obligations incumbent upon us as citizens! No citizen of this republic has the right to find fault with his government, unless he has exercised his power and his rights as one of those citizens, endeavoring to make the government what it ought to be. No citizen who has not exercised this power has the right to blame the sheriff or the mayor or the governor or any other officer of the state if, perchance, the laws of his state are not being enforced within the state or the county or the city in which he lives, for it is his own fault and he can blame no other; but when he has done his part, then he can be justified, and not otherwise.

What a wonderful privilege it is to be a citizen of a republic where every citizen has an equal right. He should then exercise the same for the welfare and exaltation of the people. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Sin should not be permitted to go rampant when it is a violation of law, and every good citizen will see that he does his part to have wholesome laws passed, and that they are executed and administered as they should be, in the spirit of right and in opposition to wrong. When we read in our newspaper files of the gross transgression of law all over the land, the people violating the provisions of the Constitution, which we believe has been inspired of God, how our hearts must be filled with indignation against this wanton violation of law. When we see such wholesome legislation, as the law prohibiting the sale and manufacture of intoxicating liquor, wantonly being violated, and how many officers there are who perhaps are not in sympathy with the law or, what is worse, corrupted by the bribes of the law breakers, wink at such violations, how humiliated we must feel when we realize that these are the men whom we have chosen to execute the laws, and we are therefore ourselves to blame. Indifference to politics, neglect to attend primaries, apathy in matters of such vital importance as the government for which we are directly responsible, will not exonerate us from this blame.

There is another association to which I desire to call your attention, a still grander and greater one than those which form the nations of the earth. It is all-embracing in its scope. It is the Church and kingdom of God; and in looking out upon this

congregation, made up of men and women coming from every nation under heaven, formed under a supreme law, the perfect law of liberty, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, designed to exalt the children of God, to liberate them from the bondage of sin, governed by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only plan by which men and women can be brought in harmony with the will of their Creator, how my heart thrills with joy and my bosom swells with pride to feel that I am a member of it. Then I think of the obligations; and Oh, how great the benefits! Our obligations to God; the Giver of all good, a life of devotion and obedience to his law; our obligations to one another as members of this great association; a life of honesty and integrity, of virtue, of brotherly love; our obligation to ourselves, to keep ourselves clean and unspotted from the sins of the world. In short, the obligations of this Association are so all-embracing that they include within them all the obligations of every proper association which we may form, and preclude our membership in any other.

Those who faithfully discharge the obligation of this association will incidentally fulfil those of all the rest, the obligations of husbands and wives, of parents, and children, business obligations, and the obligations of citizenship. Unfaithful husbands and wives are not good members of the Church. Parents who fail to teach their children, both by precept and example, are not good members. Men and women who violate the laws of their country, state and city, and especially officers who wink at such violation, or who conspire or join in their violation are not only not good citizens, but they are likewise not good Latter-day Saints. Not only is it an obligation to lead a clean and virtuous life, an honest and moral life in our association as members of the Church, but also in every other association. No man is a good citizen if he leads an immoral life. No officer is a good citizen who winks at and condones the violations of law. Such men may be found who will cry themselves hoarse in lauding the "Stars and Stripes," and prate about the Constitution and the principles of human liberty, and are frequently found at the primaries and conventions seeking nominations to public office, but if they are unclean they are not good citizens. "When the wicked rule the people mourn." Hence the obligation to choose good men and wise men for places of public trust.

Many and great are the blessings to be derived from our association in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but they may only be realized when we fulfil the obligations in connection therewith, the obligations of faith in God and repentance from sin, the works of obedience to the law of the gospel. Then shall we be cleansed from sin in the blood of the Lamb of God, then shall we be enlightened by his Holy Spirit, then shall we grow in the knowledge of God and good works day by day, and finally receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him, even "Eternal Life,"

God's greatest gift to his faithful sons and daughters. May they all be yours, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord. Amen.

ELDER J. GOLDEN KIMBALL

(Of the First Council of Seventy.)

During our two day's conference I have listened with a great deal of interest to what our brethren have said to us. My mind has been very active during the conference, and I have thought about a great many wonderful things, to me, that might sound very flat to you; but for some reason, this afternoon, I feel like a fellow who had run entirely out of material, having exhausted the material that I had, in thought. I think of what Elbert Hubbard said. It struck me rather strangely the other day. He said: "If you are going to reform the world you had better begin with yourself, and there will be one rogue less in the world." Of course, I did not want to apply that to myself, but I would not object to applying it to you.

Now, brethren and sisters, I shall address you for a short period of time, only a few minutes—although it seems a long time to you, and does to me; it certainly will before I get through. My voice has been heard among this people for nearly thirty years. I think I have been in the ministry here at home for nearly that length of time. I would not give my experience and the association I have had with the brethren of the authorities for all the riches in the world. I hope, brethren and sisters, that during these thirty years, I have created an impression in your minds—at least I have tried to do that—that I am trying to be honest. I am trying to be truthful. I am trying to be sincere and loyal and unafraid. There is nothing that I desire more, outside of the Spirit of God and the honoring of the Priesthood and the sustaining of this work, than to have an honest mind. It seems to me during the past few years that the minds of many are warped. We do not think honest; we do not hear straight, nor do we see straight. I am sure, from the experience I have had in the Church, that the Lord can do very little for a man who persists in being dishonest and untruthful; and, of course, it goes without saying that no man or woman in the Church of Jesus Christ can be immoral, and have the Spirit of God to be with them. I read in the Doctrine and Covenants the message that was given to the elders in early days. The Lord said: "But with some I am not well pleased." Now, what was their trouble? "Because they will not open their mouths but hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Woe unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them, and it shall come to pass if they are not more faithful unto me it shall be taken away even that which they have." I realize, my brethren and sisters, that, during the past thirty years I may have said some foolish things. I have, in my own way, given the people a good deal of chaff to get them to take a little wheat, but some of them haven't got sense enough to pick the wheat out from the chaff. If a man in this Church ever does