

ance, the needs of the hour, and follow that counsel, I promise you in the name of the Lord deliverance from your own difficulties and peace and safety and ultimately salvation in the kingdom of God. May he grant it to us through obedience to his divine authority reestablished in the earth, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

ELDER RULON S. WELLS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

May the Lord grant me his spirit while I stand before you. I recall a very important passage in that matchless sermon, the greatest of all sermons—the sermon delivered by the Saviour of the world upon the Mount. This particular passage seems to me to be all inclusive. Said he—“Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” It seems to me that this comprises the entire sermon, but what a wonderful undertaking it is to become perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. That is the true goal towards which every true follower of Christ should strive.

The difficulty in attaining his perfection is great, and sometimes people stand appalled at the very thought of it. Did the Lord really mean that we should become perfect? Do not accuse our Saviour of being guilty of folly or of teaching that which he did not expect to be followed.

There are two things that are positively essential to the attainment of that goal for, without them, it would be impossible. The Lord knowing this endowed us with those two things that we might become perfect. What are they? They are: First, “The Free Agency of Man” and second, “The Knowledge of Good and Evil.” They are fundamental with us. The Lord inspired the writer of the Declaration of Independence to put them into that wonderful document, wherein it declares that “all men are created equal and *have been endowed by their Creator* with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” These are the things that are essential to the attainment of perfection.

Let no one think that they constitute perfection, nor that the freedom of will—the power to think, to determine and to do the thing one wills is perfect salvation. It is not. Nevertheless these two things are positively essential to the attainment both of perfection and salvation itself; but whether we shall reach that goal or not depends entirely on the use we make of them. If, in the exercise of our free agency, we choose the good and reject the evil, we are surely preparing ourselves for salvation; but if on the contrary we choose the evil and reject the good, we are just as surely on our way to damnation.

These two things are God-given attributes. We inherited them from our divine parents. They are not the gift of any government—they are our inalienable rights with which we have been endowed

by our Creator and we may not rightfully be deprived of them by any human power.

Our first venture in the application of these attributes occurred in the Garden of Eden. The Lord planted a garden in the east of Eden with wonderful trees, among which were the "Tree of Life" and the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil," and we read:

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:15, 16, 17.)

Partaking of the fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" was forbidden; not because this knowledge was undesirable, for, on the contrary, it was very much to be desired for without it man could not become perfect; but because the Lord intended that man should exercise his own free agency with which he had been endowed thus causing him to assume the full responsibility for his own acts be they good or evil; and knowing the dangers that await all those who have thus been endowed, and the disaster that comes to those who fail, the Lord forbade him and gave him full warning that the failure of his venture, should it so be, might not be attributed to divine intervention. No! Adam and his posterity must now assume full responsibility.

The sin of Adam consisted in yielding to the temptation of the devil and breaking God's commandment; therefore he and his posterity must suffer the penalty, which was death. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23.)

What was the forbidden fruit? I do not think it was an apple, a pear or a peach, or anything else of that nature. The result of partaking of the fruit is set forth in Genesis 2:22: "And the Lord said: Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." And now lest he should put forth his hand and partake also of the tree of life and live forever in his sin he drove the man out of the Garden and placed Cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life—another marvelous tree the fruit of which is eternal life which God in his unbounded love bestows upon those who love him and keep his commandments.

Two wonderful trees bearing wonderful fruit—both are good and are designed for the perfecting of God's children. To me they appear as figures of speech.

First: The tree of knowledge of good and evil, the fruit of which is implied in the name of the tree—the "knowledge of good and evil." This is a figure denoting the spirit of Christ or the light of Christ.

In proof of this I quote the following scripture:

In him was life; and the life was the light of man.

And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.

That was the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. (John 1:4, 5, and 9.)

Again:—

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19.)

And again:

For behold the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil. (Book of Mormon, Moroni 7:16.)

Second: The tree of life, the fruit of which is also implied in the name of the tree 'Eternal Life.' God's greatest gift to man, but not while under the bondage of sin, for Cherubim and a flaming sword still keep the way to the tree of life. And what is this tree that bears such precious fruit?

This figure denotes the "Love of God."

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

Again in the Book of Mormon—1st Nephi 11: 25—it is given definitely that the tree of life is the "Love of God."

The fruit of the tree of life is sweet beyond all comparison. The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is bitter because God gave unto man that he should act for himself and choose between good and evil. This is the "bitter cup" of an earth life experience. We are told in II Nephi 2:15-23 that there needs must be opposition and that there could have been no progress had not Adam transgressed by partaking of the forbidden fruit. Let me read these enlightening paragraphs in full:

"And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter. * * *

And now, behold if Adam had not transgressed, he would not have fallen; but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin." (II Nephi 2; 15; 22; 23.)

And furthermore the divine purpose would have been defeated for there would have been no posterity. Read also Paragraph 25:

Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

But what could the knowledge of good and evil avail us if we were not free to choose and how could we choose without that knowledge? There is no virtue in doing good under compulsion; and likewise there is no vice in doing evil under compulsion, and without knowledge of good and evil there could be no sin; for

where there is no law, there can be no condemnation. Now, these two things must work together for the perfecting of mankind.

In all this that I have said, and more particularly in what I have read from the revealed word of God, the divine purpose with regard to mankind is made as plain as day; namely that we might become "perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." But what a tremendous undertaking and what a perilous venture for mankind! To have a knowledge of good and evil and be endowed with freedom to act according to our own free will.

I have read of the perils of the sea and have greatly admired those dauntless voyagers and early explorers who sailed out into the great unknown—the boundless and uncharted ocean. These brave and courageous men were the heroes of my boyhood days. How they battled the winds and the waves and the mountains of ice, to say nothing of the mutiny of their oftentimes rebellious crews who being less courageous sought safety in return to their native shores.

But these dangers and perils are as nothing when compared with those encountered by man when he launched his barque or set his sail for his voyage upon life's sea.

"Paddling your own canoe" is a noble undertaking. Having our free agency and a knowledge of good and evil might be a simple affair if there were no opposing winds; but the devil came also with all his temptations, allurements and deceptive lies to entice men to sin and lead them away from God, for as already stated, there must needs be opposition and hence our problem is to exercise our free agency in choosing between good and evil which we are able to do by reason of the knowledge we have; but "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing" said the poet—"Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring."

In order to get a clear understanding of the dangers and perils of our earth life experience, let us consider for a few moments the havoc and disaster wrought upon mankind as a result of the conflict between the forces of good and evil. Think of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain and the curse of the Almighty that fell upon the latter and his posterity as a result; think of the wickedness of the world in the days of Noah:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth . . . (Gen. 6:5, 6.)

So great was the wickedness that God destroyed the whole race excepting only Noah and his family by sending the greatest deluge the world has ever known.

Consider Sodom and Gomorrah and the slaughter of the innocents in the days of Herod, and the massacres of Genghis Khan and of the Huguenots, on the eve of St. Bartholomew. Consider the "great world war" and the millions of lives that were sacrificed.

Then think of all the murders, the adulteries and robberies—of the kidnappings and burglaries, and the evils of avarice and greed and all the whole category of crimes with which the world has been afflicted and all because men, in the exercise of their free agency under the temptations and deceptions of the devil, have chosen the evil rather than the good; have loved darkness rather than light. No wonder then that God who foresaw the whole drama of human life warned Adam of its dangers and perils, and of its trials and tribulations and finally of death, for said he: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Thus wickedness grows rampant in the world until the earth is ripe for the hour of God's judgment when "all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth."

This is indeed a gloomy picture of the great conflict which is still raging in the world, and one might well be struck with terror if there were not a brighter side. One might well complain against the Lord who made him, for driving him out of his presence into a wicked world to shift for himself against an evil foe, even the arch-enemy of God, the adversary of our souls, unless at the same time he fortified him for the conflict and offered him the necessary protection.

Let no one think that God has failed in this. No indeed! He has provided for our full safety and a successful voyage across the perilous sea of life. He gave us holy commandments and warned of dangers ahead. He was on our right hand and on our left. He pointed out the right way and he warned against the wrong way; but he used no compulsion; he let us choose for ourselves because his plan is to prove us and see "if we will do all things whatsoever the Lord our God shall command us." But what is most important of all, he gave us a Pilot who knew the reefs, the rocks and the shoals of the sea, who commanded the waves and the winds and they obeyed. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) All things, whatsoever the Lord, our God shall command, are embodied in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore the path of safety is: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent and be baptized everyone of you for the remission of your sins, and get the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by servants of God who have been commissioned of Jesus Christ to perform these sacred ordinances.

To believe in him is choosing the good—to repent is rejecting the evil, therefore; "Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you." (Jas. 4:7-8.)

This is the proper use of these two divine attributes, the "Free Agency of Man" and the "Knowledge of Good and Evil," with which God has endowed us and which are positively essential to the attainment of our goal,—perfection. This is also the way to

secure the remission of our sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost which is the spirit of truth that leadeth unto all truth, and if we get it and keep it by right living, it will surely lead us to the "Tree of Life" which is the "Love of God" the fruit of which tree is sweet beyond all comparison. "The Tree of Life" is also known as the "Well of living water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14.)

Attaining to these heights means perfection.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

May the Lord safely pilot us into that haven of safety even the "Love of God" where perfection reigns supreme.—Amen.

The Relief Society Singing Mothers sang an anthem, "The Lord's Prayer," after which the benediction was pronounced by Elder Charles S. Clark, President of the Cassia Stake.

Conference adjourned until 2 o'clock.

FIRST DAY

AFTERNOON MEETING

The second session of the Conference commenced at 2 o'clock, Friday afternoon, April 5.

The Relief Society Singing Mothers furnished the music for this meeting.

The congregation joined with the Relief Society Singing Mothers in singing the hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Richard C. May, President of the Minidoka Stake, offered the opening prayer.

An anthem, "The heavens are telling," was sung by the Relief Society Singing Mothers.

ELDER STEPHEN L. RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I desire to speak on "Orthodoxy" or more definitely on the subject, "Being Orthodox."

I am led to believe that this subject is timely and of some general importance by many expressions which have reached me, coming from both young and mature people in the Church, which seem to indicate that there is something of an aversion to being considered orthodox. Not infrequently does one hear it said, "Yes, I am a member of the Church. I think it is all right, but I don't pretend to be orthodox."

TRUE DEFINITION OF ORTHODOXY

The manner of making such a statement, or others like it, usually carries the implication that the one who takes this position regards being