

things, that there will be no final frustration of God's purposes. God has known "all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men." (1 Ne. 9:6.)

Humbly, therefore, I promise to go whithersoever I am sent, striving to speak the words He would have me say and acknowledging in the tremblings of my soul that I cannot fully be His Special Witness unless my life is fully special. I close with pleadings from the hymn "O, Divine Redeemer!" which pleadings are my pleadings:

*Ah! turn me not away,
Receive me, tho' unworthy, . . .
Hear Thou my cry, . . .
Behold, Lord, my distress! . . .
Thy pity show in my deep
anguish! . . .
Shield me in danger,
O regard me! . . .
O, divine Redeemer! . . .
Grant me pardon, and remember not,
remember not, O Lord, my sins! . . .
Help me, my Savior!
(Charles Gounod, New York: G.
Schirmer.)*

In the holy name of Jesus Christ,
amen.

Elder Richard G. Scott

The Lord's plan

Our son has a small toy robot. It can walk and perform other simple functions. Should it fall, it can, with some difficulty, right itself. It performs its programmed functions mechanically, without feeling. Yet, it has no capacity to grow or to alter its destined course. It responds immediately to any external force that satisfies its needs, and ceases to function when its internal spring is spent. Satan would have all of the children of Father in Heaven behave like robots.

The Choir sang "Faith of Our Fathers" without announcement.

President Tanner

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, and the Choir has sung "Faith of Our Fathers."

The congregation will please sing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

The congregation joined the Tabernacle Choir in singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

President Tanner

Elder Richard G. Scott of the First Quorum of the Seventy will speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

How different is the plan of the Lord. Consider the birth of an infant—an independent spirit created by God (see Moses 6:36) and matured in the premortal existence, tabernacled in a body of flesh and bones. A mother and father participate with God in this sacred experience. These parents love, guide, and inspire the growing child. With proper understanding of and obedience to the teachings of the Savior, the child learns "precept upon precept" (see D&C 98:12), and by practice of truth, is converted into a self-reliant, loving, serving son or daughter

of God, whose potential for growth and accomplishment is limitless; whose destiny, if he is fully obedient, is to return to the presence of God to partake of his glory and to share in his exalted work. Such an individual can have great happiness in this life as well.

Life—a period of proving and growth

Mortal life is a proving ground. God said, "We will make an earth wherein these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them." (see Abr. 3:24-26.)

Our proving grounds vary. Some of us are born with physical limitations; others are lonely or do not enjoy good health. Some are challenged by economic conditions, the lack of good parental example, or a myriad of other things that test our mettle. While much of the pain and sorrow we endure is the result of our own stubborn acts of disobedience, many of the things that appear to be obstacles in our path are used by a loving Creator for our own personal growth.

Life never was intended to be easy. Rather, it is a period of proving and growth. It is interwoven with difficulties, challenges, and burdens. We are immersed in a sea of persistent, worldly pressures that could destroy our happiness. Yet these very forces, if squarely faced, provide opportunity for tremendous personal growth and development. The conquering of adversity produces strength of character, forges self-confidence, engenders self-respect, and assures success in righteous endeavor.

One who exercises free agency by faith grows from challenges, is purified by sorrow, and lives at peace. In contrast, one who frantically seeks to satisfy appetite and worldly desire is driven in a downward spiral to tragic depths. Temptation is the motivating

influence in his exercise of free agency.

A loving, patient, understanding Father

Some of us at one time or another let the pressures of life or the false teachings of men cloud our vision, but when we see with clarity, the difference between the plan of God and that of Satan is unmistakable. Satan would convert divinely independent spirits into creatures bound by habit, restricted by appetite, and enslaved by transgression. He has never deviated from his intent to enslave and destroy. He would persuade us to improperly use the divine gift of free agency. Through subtle, tempting influence, he encourages us to gratify desire for personal power and influence or to succumb to appetite. He progressively binds those that follow carnal desire. Unless they repent, they are effectively converted into robots who no longer exercise control over their eternal destiny.

He cleverly confuses some until they depict God as an exacting, harsh judge, or as a distant deity, devoted to meticulous scorekeeping. God is neither. He is a loving, patient, understanding Father deeply interested in our personal welfare, anxious for our happiness, and totally committed to our eternal progression.

"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.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16-17.)

A righteous character and true humility

Our happiness on earth, as well as our eternal salvation, requires many correct decisions, no one of which is difficult to make. Together they forge

a character resistant to the eroding influences that surround us. Noble character is like a treasured porcelain made of select raw materials, formed with faith, carefully crafted by consistent righteous acts, and fired in the furnace of uplifting experience. It is an object of great beauty and priceless worth. Yet it can be broken in a moment through transgression. When protected by self-control, righteous character will endure for eternity.

We must cultivate true humility, not the ability to appear humble, but the sacred gift of true humility.

Humility is the precious, fertile soil of righteous character. It germinates the seeds of personal growth. When cultivated through the exercise of faith, pruned by repentance, and fortified by obedience and good works, such seeds produce the cherished fruit of spirituality. (See Alma 26:22.) Divine inspiration and power then result. Inspiration is to know the will of the Lord. Power is the capability to accomplish that inspired will. (See D&C 43:15-16.) Such power comes from God after we have done "all we can do." (2 Ne. 25:23.)

The plan of happiness

May I share these introspective thoughts of an individual that found the path to happiness: "I am truly, deeply loved of the Lord. He will do all that I permit him to do for my happiness. The key to unlock that power is myself. While others will

counsel, suggest, exhort, and urge, the Lord has given me the responsibility and the agency to make the basic decisions for my happiness and eternal progress. As I read and ponder the scriptures and with deep faith earnestly seek my Father in prayer, peace envelops my being. With sincere repentance and obedience to the commandments of God, coupled with genuine concern for and service to others, fear is purged from my heart. I am conditioned to receive and to interpret divine aid given to mark my path with clarity. No friend, bishop, stake president, or General Authority can do this for me. It is my divine right to do it for myself. I have learned to be at peace and to be happy. I know I will have a rewarding, productive, meaningful life."

This individual is not a robot enslaved by adversity, nor need we be as we wisely use our free agency to follow the teachings of the Savior.

With all the love of my heart, I extend an invitation to all to obtain a fulness of an understanding of the plan of happiness and exaltation provided by the Savior. I testify that this fulness is found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I love you and ask you to seek that fulness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Tanner

Elder Richard G. Scott has just spoken to us.

Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder Howard W. Hunter

Conference time, spiritual revival

From around the world this season of the year come thousands of people who gather at what has become known as the "Crossroads of the West" for a conference of the mem-

bers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many years have passed since settlers came in covered wagons into this valley in the tops of the Rockies. Conference was an important occasion in their day, and it continues to be a significant occasion