

You and Your Free Agency

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Lately I have been reading some of the discourses of the prophets and the Church presidents and I have found some interesting thoughts, which, in my opinion, are applicable at the present time.

In October conference of 1867 George A. Smith said:

It is very desirable that all of our brethren who are not acquainted with the English language should learn it. We do not wish to blot out the original languages that they may have spoken, but we want them all—men and women, old and young—to learn the English language so perfectly that they will be able to thoroughly understand for themselves the teachings and instructions and the published works of the Church, as well as the laws of the country. And while we preach to all classes—all the boys and girls under ninety—to go to school and educate themselves in the various useful branches, we do not want our brethren who do not speak the English language to think that they are neglected or without the pale of this call. We hope the bishops and teachers will make every reasonable exertion to stir up the minds of the brethren and sisters who do not thoroughly understand English to the importance of this particular item of counsel. [JD, 12:138]

Then I read what President Brigham Young said in April 1852:

I have asked the Board of Regents to cast out from their system of education, the present orthography and written form of our language, that when my children are taught the graphic sign for A, it may always represent that individual sound only. But as it now is, the child is perplexed that the sign A should have one sound in mate, a second sound in father, a third sound in fall, a fourth sound in man, and a fth sound in many, and in other combinations, soundings different from these, while, in others, A is not sounded at all. I say, let it have one sound all the time.[JD, 1:70]

And so, I am trying very fervently to follow the counsel of President George A. Smith, and even though the records of the Church show that some attempts have been made to do as Brigham Young requested, you don't know

Angel Abrea was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 26 June 1984.