

Eightieth Annual Conference

OF THE

CHURCH OF JESUS
CHRIST OF LAT
TER-DAY SAINTS



Held in the Tabernacle
and Assembly Hall, Salt
Lake City, Utah, April
3rd, 4th *and* 6th, 1910,
with a full report of
the discourses

PUBLISHED BY THE DESERET NEWS

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the Saints will uphold their hands, they will have more influence for good in their homes. The man or the woman who maligns the Church authorities, who finds fault with the president of their stake, or the bishop of their ward, that man and woman have not the influence with their children that they would have if they were loyal to their leaders, and thus please God.

I bear testimony to the truth of the Gospel. It is my testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that the leaders of the Church are men of God, and that our prophet and leader today is a prophet of God; and I bear this testimony in the fear of the Lord, and in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Prof. E. C. Rodone sang the baritone solo, "Conversion of St. Paul."

ELDER GEORGE F. RICHARDS.

Responsibility of parents for conduct of children.—Evil effects of reading pernicious literature.—Importance of Church School education and influence.—Benefits of practical training in Religion Classes.

Of the several themes spoken upon by our president, in the opening session of this conference, intimating that the same might be enlarged upon, during the succeeding sessions, by other speakers, there are none of more importance than that of the responsibility resting upon the Latter-day Saints with respect to the proper bringing up of their children and the proper care of them. Next to our own salvation, of interest to us, is the salvation of our children. Psychologists have said that there are three important means or agencies potent

in the education of the child: the home, the school, and the church; the home first of importance. Nature has laid the responsibility upon parents to care for their offspring until they are able to care for themselves; the law also demands this of the citizens; and not the least important, in the care which is exacted is that of the proper religious and moral education, as well as the secular education that should be given to the child. God our Father has also exacted of us that we do properly teach our children. He has said, in His revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith, as recorded in the 68th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents."

This is a law unto Zion forever; and we are commanded to teach our children to pray, and to walk uprightly before God. This great responsibility rests upon us, and the love which parents ought to have for their children of itself ought to be sufficient incentive and inducement for them to put forth their best endeavors, and use their influence with their children, and properly teach them in the way that they should go. Perhaps the most effective means at our command, as parents in Israel, for properly influencing and bringing up our children, is that of example in the home. Children learn by imitation; that which they see, they naturally undertake to imitate. Parents who know the Gospel is true, if we have

accepted it as a reality, we must know that it is calculated to make us what the Lord would have us be—Christ-like in every respect. If we are consistent Latter-day Saints, we are trying to live by the precepts of the Gospel; and if we are doing this in our homes, our children will come up in the way they should go, without a great deal of preceptive teaching. At any rate, our example before our children should harmonize with our precepts.

A danger which confronts the children of the Latter-day Saints, I am impressed, is that of reading dime novels and literature of that caliber. I read, from a Salt Lake daily paper, a few days ago, an account of a band of boys, ranging from fifteen to seventeen years, who had been misled in this way. When they were discovered, and the place of their rendezvous was disclosed, it was found that the interior of the place was lined with arms and furnished with a library of dime novels. It was learned, by confession of these young boys, that they had broken into stores and residences on numerous occasions; that they had stolen from their neighbors. One young boy admitted that they had contemplated robbing his mother, and when the question was asked, "What would you have done had she resisted?" the ready response was, "We would have killed her." This, I take it, is largely the result of reading such literature as was found in the dugout which they frequented. We are told in proverbs, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." James Allen, treating this subject, tells us that "character is the entire sum of our thoughts." I desire to read one or two of his sentiments along this line; he says:

"As the plant springs from and could not be without the seed, so every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called spontaneous and unpremeditated, as to those which are deliberately executed. Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruits. Thus does a man garner in the sweet and bitter fruitage of his own husbandry. A noble and godlike character is not a thing of favor or chance, but is the natural result of continued effort in right thinking, the fruit of long cherished association with godlike thoughts."

Brethren and sisters, I think it is of the utmost importance that we choose for our children the books which they read; and that we choose for them as far as lies in our power the associations that they keep. The public schools, maintained as they are by public taxation, are by law forbidden teaching religion in those schools. The result is an exclusively secular education, an education godless in its character; and such an education is most imperfect. What, then, are the schools going to do for us in the proper education of our children? Who has not looked upon his little boy or girl, five or six years of age, the child approaching the years when he or she will be expected to enter the district school, but experiences a great deal of concern and anxiety, fearing that the morals of that child may be weakened, instead of being stimulated and encouraged, by attendance at the district schools. The restrictive influence in the school-room is scarcely sufficient to overcome the unhallowed and unwholesome environment often encountered on the playground. The church, then, has something to do as also the home, for they are to supply the entire moral needs of the

child. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has undertaken to do this mighty work for those who have gotten beyond the grades and have reached the high-school period. We have established Church schools throughout the land, some thirty in number, accommodating something like eight or ten thousand boys and girls, principally sons and daughters of the Latter-day Saints; there are some exceptions, and those schools are making converts of some of these exceptions. It was but a few days ago I learned of one young man here in Salt Lake being baptized into the Church as the result of his attendance at the Church school, having come from abroad and of non-Mormon parentage. Such is the influence, in part, that these schools are exercising upon those who attend them.

At a recent convention of educators, held in the East, Professor Horace H. Cummings, the superintendent of our Church schools, made a statement before that body that, of the four hundred teachers engaged in the Latter-day Saints' Church Schools, not one of them is a user of tobacco. Those educators were staggered by this statement, but not so much, perhaps, as by the statement which followed that of the ten thousand students who are attending these academies and colleges of the Church school system, not above one per cent of them were using tobacco. This statement found its way into the Associated Press and has gone out to the world, and the whole educational world wonders at conditions in Zion. What Brother Cummings said in regard to tobacco, I have no doubt, could be said with equal truth with respect to the use of alcoholic drinks of every form.

They are practically eliminated from use by teachers and students; and so many other virtues are taught and practiced in these schools, that we feel that those who have the opportunity of attending, and who do attend, are well looked after, and are receiving an education of which their parents may justly be proud. But there are a host yet who have not this opportunity, and as we have not sufficient funds to increase the number of schools, and place them where all our children of the high school grade can have access to them, we are extending the Religion Class work into some of those districts, teaching the advanced grades; and we expect to do more in that line.

But what about all those who are being taught in the grades of the district schools, who are numbered, perhaps, by hundreds of thousands? What is the Church going to do for them? I answer that the same inspiration which has brought forth the Church school, which is doing such a mighty work among the Latter-day Saints, the fruits of it being seen on every hand, at home and in the mission field abroad, that same inspiration has established an organization for small children, which I feel will be, eventually, as far reaching as are the present Church schools; I refer to the Religion Classes. It is designed, in the organization of these classes, that there shall be a religion class taught at the conclusion of each day's district school work. At present we are advocating the holding of only one session a week. We will be glad when we have accomplished this in all the wards of Zion; it hasn't been fully accomplished yet. We desire the Bishops and their counselors, and the presidents of

stakes, to join us in this very important labor. We feel that no presidency of a stake should be satisfied until every ward in the stake has a religion class, so that the children may have equal privileges with others throughout the land. When this is attained, we will all the time be working along the line of proficiency, the best methods of prosecuting our work; we will be teaching, in our Church schools, educators who will labor as instructors in the Religion classes. We will make steady progress, and the time will come when we will have a Religion class, practically, in each of the organized wards of the Church, conducted five days of every week during the district school terms. This is our aim, our object, and purpose; assuredly it is a laudable and praiseworthy one. I do not see how any father or mother in Israel can help but see the necessity for this organization, and for their supporting the same, placing their children where they can enjoy its benefits.

We have other auxiliary organizations in the Church—the Primary association, which is of wider range at present than the Religion classes, and has greater numbers; and we have the Sunday School, which numbers many more. I desire to say to you that progress is being made in the Religion class work, and I think I would not be mistaken in my assertion that during the past year our increase in percentage of enrollment will exceed that of any other of the auxiliary associations of the Church. We are making headway. These other organizations teach the theory, theology if you please, while the Religion class teaches religion. Faith comes from hearing, but knowledge comes from doing, and in the Re-

ligion classes we are teaching the children how to *do*. I heard one of the mission presidents state, in a meeting held with the members of the Council of the Twelve, just recently, that our boys who go out into the mission field are not sufficiently familiar with the ordinances they have to perform. They need more training in the Religion classes and other organizations of the Church. That is the very work we are undertaking to do. We teach the children how to ask a blessing upon the food, how to pray in the family, how to open or close a meeting, to repeat the exact words that should be used in asking the blessing upon the bread and the water in the administration of the sacrament, and how to administer the ordinance of baptism. These things are taught to them practically, and we teach them to *live* the Gospel. I will read just two or three maxims from our outlines, showing the character of the work that we design to do:

“The aim and object of this work is not so much to teach pupils to know as to lead them to do and to form proper habits of life; and there should be constantly in the mind of the teacher this thought: Each of these lessons has for its purpose the forming of some religious habit. To encourage proper application of these lessons, review, at the beginning of each session, the assignment of outside work given at last meeting. All work outside of class should consist not in the preparations of lessons but in the practical application of truths learned. Teachers remember that this course is a training in practical work and habits, and not merely the teaching of Gospel lessons. Training in practical religious habits is the work of the Religion class. Habits depend on many successive repetitions of the same act.”

There are other maxims that are beautiful and worthy the considera-

tion of the Latter-day Saints, but time will not permit me to read them on this occasion. I invite the support of the Latter-day Saints to this very important movement—the Religion classes—and bespeak your interest in the education of the right kind that is given to your children therein. May God bless you, my brethren and sisters, and bless those who are engaged in the important labor in this and all the other organizations of the Church, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER SAMUEL O. BENNION.

(President of Central States Mission.)

If there is anything that would strengthen the testimony of an Elder in the Church, outside of the mission field, it would be to see this vast congregation here today. It is a testimony to me that the Lord knew what He was doing, when He delivered His message unto the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that the time had fully arrived when the Gospel of His kingdom should be again established in the earth.

In the mission field where I labor we are close to many places of interest, connected with the organization of the Church and the early travels of the Saints, especially in the state of Missouri. We are on the ground where the Prophet Joseph Smith once lived with the people, where he labored, and preached. Over there in the city of Independence, Missouri, I scarcely ever pass the court house, but what I think of the time when he was brought down from Far West and

exhibited, almost like a wild beast, for the people to look at who desired to see the Mormon prophet. I had the privilege of meeting a lady, once, whose father was one of those mobbers. She told me she remembered that, when she was a child, her father carried out coals from the fire-place to light the cigars of those men who brought the Prophet Joseph from Far West. She also told me that her father was one of the men who tarred and feathered Bishop Partridge at Independence. We questioned her about this and asked her what she thought of such a proceeding. She said she did not think it was right, but that they were all excited over this new religion. It had caused more or less excitement, especially in the section where she lived.

My testimony is the Lord did reveal unto the Prophet Joseph Smith the everlasting Gospel, as we read in the writings of Saint John:

"I saw another angel fly through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell upon the earth, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come."

My testimony is that that angel has flown, that the Gospel contained in the Book of Mormon is the Gospel that the angel delivered here on the earth; again, that the Gospel that was taught by Christ the Lord was restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and is the same in the Book of Mormon as in the New Testament. As a result of that teaching, many thousands of men and women have accepted the Gospel through the testimony proclaimed by the Elders who have