

Education of Children—The Necessity of Supporting Home Publications—Ladies' Relief Societies—St. George and Salt Lake Temples—Sabbath Schools

Discourse by President George A. Smith, delivered at the Adjourned General Conference, held in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, May 10, 1874.

I rise on the present occasion, desiring the faith and prayers of the brethren and sisters that I may be able to address them by the majesty of the Spirit of the Almighty. When we come before the Lord to partake of the Sacrament, in memory of his death and suffering, we witness unto him that we do remember him, that we love one another, and that we are willing to endeavor to do all in our power to fulfill our several duties on the earth.

One of the first and most responsible duties that rest upon us is the education, training and cultivation of the minds of our children. A child learns from us by our examples, the actions or examples of the parents being ever remembered by the children. A pious old deacon who may, by the way, have been a hypocrite, and had two half bushel measures, one to buy, and the other to sell with, may be very sure that his children will be dishonest. So it may be with our children if we do not act before them as becometh Saints; our precepts may be very good, but their effect will not be very powerful unless our examples correspond.

We are more or less careless as to the observance of the Sabbath; and, in consequence of the neglect of the Latter-day Saints in this respect, I feel anxious to stir them up to diligence in attending meetings on the Sabbath and on fast days, and in having their children do the same. I have visited a number of Sunday schools, and I have found that there was a good deal of interest manifested in them, and that much benefit to the rising generation is resulting from spending a couple of hours on the Sabbath in giving them religious or such other instruction as may be necessary to cultivate their minds; and, I wish the Bishops and presiding Elders, on their return to their several Branches, to stir up the minds of the brethren and sisters to the necessity of encouraging the Sunday schools, that they may be interesting and agreeable as well as instructive. Stir up the parents, too, that they may be alive and awake in getting the children ready for school in season, and that punctuality in attendance be encouraged. Endeavor also to induce parents and other elder members of families who can do so, to attend the Sunday schools, that there may be no lack of teachers, for one of the most useful callings for persons who can possibly or reasonably attend to it, is to teach the youth in Sunday schools.

I also advise that the "Juvenile Instructor" be circulated extensively among our children. It is a work calculated to inform their minds on the principles of the Gospel; from its pages they may also gain a knowledge of the history of the Church, as well as a variety of other useful and entertaining information. It is a very useful publication, and the benefits it is capable of conferring upon our young people are numerous and great. While speaking on this subject, I will refer to other papers published by our brethren in these valleys—the "Deseret News," the "Salt Lake Herald," "Ogden Junction," "Provo Times," and the "Beaver" and "St. George Enterprise," all of which contain a good deal of information about our home affairs specially, and of events in the world generally. I hope that, in all the Stakes of Zion, the people will manifest a spirit and determination to support papers which are published for their benefit. The "Deseret News," daily, semi-weekly, and weekly, besides the general news of the world, also contains many of the sermons of President Young and others of the Church authorities, and it should be widely circulated in all the settlements of the Saints. The mails now run to all parts of the Territory, and though we cannot boast a great deal about the punctuality of some of them, yet in nearly every settlement a mail comes along once in a while bringing the "Deseret News," and a man is pretty safe on the main thoroughfares in taking the weekly, and in many localities the semi-weekly or daily may be ventured upon.

We must do something more in relation to printing. The Women's Relief Society are publishing a paper called the "Woman's Exponent," which is a very ably edited sheet, and one containing a great deal of information. I am surprised that all the gentlemen in the Territory do not take it. I invite all the Elders, Bishops and presiding officers in the Stakes of Zion, on their return home, setting the example themselves, to solicit all their brethren, and especially the sisters, to become subscribers to this little sheet, for I am sure that they will be interested in the

instruction and information it contains. I will say that we expect in a short time, through the patronage of the brethren and sisters, that the ladies will be able to enlarge this paper, and to extend its influence far and wide.

It has been my privilege to make visits to, and to become acquainted with the Ladies' Relief Societies in many of the settlements in the Territory, and I am convinced that great good results from the labors of these organizations; and I feel certain that unless the ladies take hold of any movement designed to forward the work of the Lord in the last days, its progress will be tardy. In all parts of the world, when nations are at war, unless the women take an interest in the matter, the war goes on very heavily. I am of the opinion that in the next war between France and Germany, the French will get the best of it. Not but what I have a great opinion of German skill, energy and pluck, but I am satisfied, from traveling and personal observation, that the women of France are thoroughly aroused, and that in the next war between those two nations, the Prussians will have to fight the women of France, and then France will be likely to win.

I say to our sisters of the Relief Societies, be encouraged, meet together and discuss all questions that are calculated to interest or benefit the community, as you have the ability; and as no man can be elected to office in this Territory without the vote of the ladies, make yourselves thoroughly acquainted, not only with the politics of the country, but with every principle of local government that may be advanced, and then, whatever is calculated to benefit the people in their private or domestic circles, you will be enabled to vote intelligently, and to carry it through without difficulty.

We spend a great deal of money in following vain fashions, and in purchasing a great many articles that are useless. These societies, if they choose, can make their own fashions and they can make them according to wisdom, and so as to promote health; a great many of the fashions of the world are calculated to destroy health. A hundred questions connected with domestic economy—housekeeping, cooking, making bread and kindred subjects, that are of importance to the stomach, health and longevity of every man and woman in the Territory may be properly discussed in these Relief Societies, and useful information disseminated. A great many of the women in these valleys have not had good opportunities to become acquainted with the art of cooking, and that is an art which has something to do with every person's happiness. The example of the ladies, and the influence which they exercise, have a tendency, above all things else, to maintain, create, and preserve good morals. Men are apt to behave themselves in the society of women, and if women act wisely and prudently in guiding and controlling the course and conduct of each other, they will be able, to a great extent, to guide, control, and regulate the morals and the conduct of men. We think, however, that the policy of the Christian world, in throwing the responsibility, so far as morality is concerned, entirely upon the heads of women, is a blunder; the men should be held responsible for their own acts, and when they are guilty of that which is corrupt, low or degrading, they should be looked upon as transgressors and cast aside until, by repentance and uprightness, they prove that they are worthy of confidence.

I have been, from the commencement of the formation of this Territory, more or less identified with its politics. I was a member of the Legislature of Deseret, before Utah Territory was organized, and while it was a provisional government. I was a member of the first Legislature of the Territory, and served twenty years. During that period I was brought in contact with five different sets of federal officers, and I had a pretty good knowledge of some forty-eight or forty-nine judges. They were men sent here, from different parts of the country, to administer the law. They had a general knowledge of politics, and of the law as administered in their own immediate localities. But few of them were of high minds and noble sentiments, and many of them were incapable of occupying, with honor, the high positions they were selected to fill. Our people here in these mountains did not take much pains to acquaint themselves with the politics of the country. We had been five times robbed of all we possessed. Our leaders had been murdered and we had been expatriated and driven from the United States into these valleys, then a portion of the republic of Mexico, but afterwards acquired by the United States. We were a great way from any other settlement. It took a month, generally, to get a mail, and for about twelve years we had about seven mails a year; and in the latter part of October or about the first of November, portions of the mails for the winter before would be brought in here with ox teams. This was our condition in early days. We did not pay a great deal of attention to politics; we were not very much divided and hence we cared very little about our elections, and did not

pay much attention to them; and a good many who came from abroad were so careless that they did not obtain their naturalization papers, although, from time to time, we advised them to attend to this matter; and I now call upon the Bishops and presiding Elders, when they return home, to recommend the foreign brethren who are not naturalized to see to this; and in all localities or districts which are favored with judges who have more respect for the law than for religious bigotry, let the brethren take all pains to get naturalized, that they may have the benefits of the laws of our country, and be permitted to perform any duty required thereby, and be faithful to do so in all cases; and never let an election go by, or any other occasion in which it is important for us to take part, without paying attention to it. This advice is for the ladies as well as for the gentlemen, for every lady of twenty-one years of age, who is a citizen of the United States, or whose husband or father is a citizen of the United States, has a right, under the laws of Utah to vote; and no one need hope to hold office in Utah if the ladies say no.

I wish to call your attention to the Saint George Temple. We have got the foundation of that Temple up to the water table, about eighteen feet from the ground, and a very nice foundation it is. The building is about one hundred and forty-one feet long and about ninety-three feet wide, and when the walls are up they will be about ninety feet high. We have a very fine draught and design. The building is in a nice locality and in a very fine climate, where, all winter, and in fact the whole year, there is almost perpetual spring and summer weather; and when the Temple is completed there will be an opportunity to go there and spend the winter and attend to religious ordinances or enjoy yourselves; and if you want to go there through the summer you can eat as delicious fruits as ever grew out of the earth in any country I believe. As far as I have traveled I have never seen anything in the way of fruit that I thought was superior to that which is produced in St. George. We invite a hundred and fifty of the brethren to volunteer to go down there this summer to put up this building, and to find themselves while they are doing it. We shall call upon the Bishops, presiding Elders, teachers and others from the various stakes of Zion to take this matter in hand when they reach home, and find brethren, if they can, who are willing to go and do this work, so that by Christmas the building may be ready for the roof, that we may, in a very short time, have the font dedicated and the ordinances of the holy Priesthood performed in that place. We appeal to our brethren and sisters in behalf of this St. George Temple. Our brethren in that vicinity are doing all they can to push forward the work, but five or six months' help from a hundred or a hundred and fifty men is very desirable.

I will invite all the brethren and sisters from the settlements who may visit Salt Lake City this summer to step on to the Temple Block and see what we are doing for the Temple here. See the beautiful stones that have been quarried in the Cottonwood and brought here, every one cut and numbered for its place. And it is the duty of the brethren to call upon the Lord for his blessing upon the work and upon the workmen. I also call upon the Bishops and teachers in all the stakes of Zion, to be on hand and to see that, in the building of this Temple, in the Center Stake of Zion in the mountains, we are not under the necessity of involving ourselves in disagreeable liabilities in order to move the work forward. For the last year we have had from sixty to ninety men engaged in cutting stone on this block, and a number of other mechanics to supply them with tools and other necessities; last summer we had a considerable force of men laying these stones on the walls. In Little Cottonwood Canyon we have continually at work a force of from twenty-five to sixty men quarrying granite, and every day, Sundays excepted, two or three carloads of this granite, from ten to twelve tons each load, are brought from the quarry to the Temple Block. It is really a delightful thing, to a person who has never seen it, to go on to the block and see the skillful manner in which our architects and workmen pick up these big stones and pass them all over the building, and lay them in their place to a hair's breadth. It shows what can be done with a little management, skill and ingenuity.

We earnestly appeal to all Saints, tithe payers, to donate liberally and punctually for the prosecution of this work. While we employ so many skilled mechanics and other laborers, their families constantly require a supply of not only home products, but of money, and merchandise which costs money, and unless the brethren furnish the means to supply these necessities, we shall be obliged to dismiss many of the workmen. We have already incurred liabilities which press upon us, and we call upon the brethren to supply the means necessary to enable us to maintain our credit and continue the work.

It is the design of the teachers and superintendents of Sunday schools, to get up a children's musical jubilee. Some songs have been composed, and they are being learned and practiced, and they calculate to assemble some eight

or ten thousand children in this building and have a general time of grand musical song. The enterprise is a very laudable one. We do not know when the festival will take place but brother Goddard, the Assistant Superintendent, and a number of others who are interested in Sunday schools are doing all they can, and we ask the cooperation of the Bishops, presidents, teachers and brethren and sisters in the several Stakes of Zion to take a part in it, and make it one of the finest festivals of the kind ever held. The progress of our Sabbath schools will be encouraged, and the elevating tendency of music may be appreciated by all who participate therein. We ask our brethren to act wisely and prudently in carrying this matter out, that it may be done in such a manner as shall be satisfactory; and if a little means is necessary on the part of parents or friends let it not be wanting. In the course of my year's travel I visited schools in various parts of the world, but I found none superior to our own. I think that ours compare favorably with them, and in many respects they are superior to most that I visited, and I hope that a spirit to encourage them will be developed.

I wish to see the common school system encouraged as far as possible. The brethren in many settlements are forming Branches of the United Order, and as soon as they get fairly to work they will be able to introduce improved systems of teaching. I notice, in visiting our settlements, more or less carelessness in relation to schools. Very little pains will make a schoolroom quite comfortable, and I wish to stir up parents to the importance of visiting the schools and seeing what their children are doing, and what the teachers are doing, find out whether the little fellows are sitting on comfortable seats; whether they put a tall boy on a low seat, or a boy with short legs on a high seat, making him humpbacked. The happiness and prosperity of the whole life of a child may be a good deal impaired while attending school through a blockhead of a teacher not knowing enough to get a saw and sawing the legs of the seats his pupils sit upon, so as to make them comfortable. It is the duty of the people to look after the comfort of their children while at school, and also to procure proper books for them; and to see that the schools are provided with fuel, that in the cold weather they may be warm and comfortable. In a new country I know there are a good many disadvantages to contend with, but I feel anxious that nothing, within our power to promote the welfare of our children, should be neglected. There is no need, however, to send to the States to buy school benches. There is plenty of timber in these mountains, and a few days' work properly applied will seat any school room perfectly comfortable, for we can make just as good benches in this country as anywhere else, it is only a question of time and attention. Of course if we can do no better, send and buy; but in order that we may have means to buy what we are forced to buy, it is necessary that we exercise prudence and economy and supply our own wants as far as possible. The wholesale Cooperative Store here imports probably five million dollars' worth of goods per annum. One-half of these goods could be produced at home with our own labor; it is only a question of time and management to do it. If we were to produce one-half of these goods we should be in easy circumstances all the time, and should have plenty to buy everything we wanted to buy. We could also produce many things to sell; but by purchasing, in such immense quantities, articles that we can make ourselves, we impoverish ourselves all the time, hence we advise our brethren and sisters, in all their councils, meetings, orders, associations, and relief and retrenchment societies, to take into account every question where economy can be exercised and prudence observed, and where we can save a dollar instead of spending one let us do it, for by taking this course we can lay a foundation for permanent comfort at home, and this will prevent us from being dependent upon abroad. This is a part of my religion and this I shall continue to preach.

In relation to this United Order, I will say to those who are entering it, if questions arise that trouble you and that you wish to have explained; or if anything should arise upon which you wish for advice or counsel, if you will write your queries and send them along here to the President's office, we will answer them, and show you that the whole affair can be carried out with perfect ease. Only let this people act with one heart and one mind, as the Nephites did, and success is certain; and in a short time a great many will wonder, as some in the southern settlements have already expressed it, "Why did we not unite before?" I feel satisfied that the spirit which has been manifested here and elsewhere on this subject, is the same spirit which bore testimony to you, when you went down into the waters of baptism, that this was the work of God; and when we have this spirit in our hearts we can move forward with joy and thanksgiving, and can accomplish that which is required of us.

I wish to return my thanks to our musicians—those who direct and all who have participated in the musical exercises of our Conference. I have enjoyed them. I have visited many parts of the world, and have been to see

their organs and to hear their music; but I have heard none with which I am so well pleased as with our own. There is something sweet and lovely here, and I feel that the Spirit of the Lord has warmed the hearts and inspired the souls of those who have made melody for us during the Conference. I pray that God may bless them, that he may enlighten their minds, enliven their souls, and make their songs songs of glory forever. Amen.