

The Deseret Weekly.

PUBLISHED BY

THE DESERET NEWS COMPANY.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE.

Per Year, of Fifty-two Numbers, . . . \$2.50.

Per Volume, of Twenty-six Numbers, . . . 1.50.
IN ADVANCE.

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Saturday, . . . March 16, 1889.

GENERAL CONFERENCE.

THE Fifty-ninth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will commence at 10 o'clock on Saturday morning, April 6th, 1889, in the Tabernacle, in Salt Lake City.

The officers and members of the Church are cordially invited to attend.

WILFORD WOODRUFF,

In behalf of the Twelve Apostles.

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

THE terms religion and morality are frequently used by skeptics as different and even opposite terms. They argue that there is "no necessary connection between religion and morals," and point to the supposed fact that there are many very religious persons who are extremely immoral.

This comes from an improper conception and application of the word religion. The error is not special to skeptics. Professedly pious people are as much addicted to it as they. Religion is regarded as something merely sentimental or emotional. The practical in life is treated as belonging to another sphere. Faith, praise, adoration, devotion, exaltation of feeling, mental or spiritual ecstasy or depression, are deemed religions, and acts and doings, except as expressions of such sensations, are not classed in the same category.

But, properly speaking, religion covers much broader ground. It enters the domain of human action and influences every faculty of being. It therefore affects every department of present existence. It relates not only to the spiritual world and future life, but to this mortal sphere and the things of today. It means the duty of man to his Maker. It implies a system that regulates conduct. It includes faith and works. Anything less

than this is not religion but rhapsody.

Religion begins with faith in God. No faith, no religion. Faith must abide and continue or religion will depart. But faith alone, as a mental or spiritual emotion, is not religion. One must believe in God or he will not worship or pray, or seek for Divine guidance or do anything in a religious spirit. But to be truly religious he must be dutiful to the Being in whom he believes. Duty to God means obedience to His commands, and these are all moral in their nature and effects. Thus there is no religion without morality. There is no system, or pretended system, of religion in the world that does not include, as a part of itself, moral precepts and moral requirements. Therefore if a man is not moral he is not religious. The more immoral he is, the less religious he is. It does not matter how much he may snuffle prayers, or sing psalms, or glow with ecstasy, or beam with pious unction, he is irreligious to the extent of his immorality.

God's commandments or, if it will please the skeptics better, what purport to be God's commandments, relate not only to the worship of the Divine Being but to the acts of His creatures as intelligent and accountable persons. And these comprehend humanity in the aggregate as well as its individual particles. Therefore, religion includes the duties of man to his fellows, and his acts to his "neighbor" and his reverence to society.

All those moral precepts in the Sermon on the Mount are religious principles. They are part of the religion of Christ. So were the moral restrictions of the Mosaic code part of the religion revealed to the Hebrews. There is more spirituality in the advanced religion of Jesus than in the preparatory religion of Moses. But they are equally practical and both are essentially moral.

Religion forbids murder, lust, robbery, lying, oppression, covetousness, inebriety, the violation of individual and social rights and every species of injustice. And he who is bloodthirsty, unchaste, dishonest, false, tyrannical, brutal or intemperate is irreligious to the extent of his infraction of the religious rules against those evils, no matter how long or eloquently he may preach, or how solemn or sweet may be his manner or his language. For "actions speak louder than words," and deeds are mightier than pro-

fessions. "Handsome is that handsome does," and he only is religious who does religious deeds.

The spiritual gymnastics performed at "revivals," and the mental inebriety of so-called conversions, are no more religion than are physical acrobatic exhibitions and material intoxication. Religious thought, religious sentiment, and religious feeling are only the germs; they are not the flower of religion. Noise, shouting, exclamations and extravagant gestures are but ebullitions of excitement that sometimes borders on insanity, and are not to be classed under the name of religion, of the expression of which they are only grotesque caricatures.

True religion regulates the whole life of man. It is manifest in his deeds. It affects him as an individual, as a son, a husband, a father, a member of society, a living atom in the great body politic. It imbues him with the spirit of true morality and prompts him to acts of moral excellence.

There are skeptics, no doubt, who regulate their lives by moral principles; and they imagine that they do this independent of anything that may be called religious. But in this they are mistaken. The very principles they regard as only moral have come to them from some religious system, ancient or modern. It does not matter whether they call that religion human superstition or the product of human imagination, whether they deny or admit its purported supernatural origin. The fact remains that the principles which make up what is recognized as morality, and which unbelievers speak of as separate from religion, are and have been elements of religion and have sprung from it, and so they are indebted to religion for all their morality. Take any moral principle which is admired by the cultured mind or practiced by civilized beings, and its introduction to the world and its influence upon conduct may be traced to a religious source.

And if religion were destroyed, how much morality would remain? Take away from mankind the belief, or supposition, or dread of a Power which is above all, and to Whom all will be accountable, and how many people would there be, in this imperfect world, who would live moral lives or rise above the level of sheer selfishness and gross individualism?

Religion works in two directions. It encourages and restrains. It prompts and aids elevation of