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Delivered at the Weber Stake Conference, Ogden Monday, Jan. 1st, 1897, by

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

These reports to which we have listened, made by Brother Ballantyne and Brother Wright (representing the Sunday schools and the Mutual Improvement Associations of the Stake,) are exceedingly interesting, because upon the success of these organizations, their influence, and that which they accomplish, depends to a very great extent the future of this people and of the Church. I often think of the remarkable results that have attended the organization of the Sunday schools, as well as the Mutual Improvement Associations. What a condition we would have been in had the brethren not been inspired to organize Sunday schools! It has proved a most timely organization, and has occupied the field to the exclusion, it may be said, of those sectarian organizations and influences which would have been brought to bear upon the Latter-day Saints. There was a Bishop of the Episcopal Church, who was the Bishop of this diocese, visiting New York, and it came to my knowledge that in the circle where he was one evening he stated that Brigham Young was a very shrewd man and a very capable man, but he did not know the influence of education; he was not aware of how potent education was in forming a people; and he said there was a most excellent opportunity in Utah to start schools. "Many of the young people," he added, "manifest a great eagerness to acquire knowledge and education, and if we can raise the funds and establish schools there, we will do a great work in converting the Mormons. It is no use to attempt to convert the adults, but by furnishing the children facilities for receiving education, we can accomplish quite a work there." Acting upon that idea, schools were started in some places, in Salt Lake City, for instance, and some of the children of the Latter-day Saints attended them. The result was that in every instance that has come to my knowledge, the pupils at those schools imbibed false ideas concerning religion and became aliens to the faith of their parents. I do not know that they ever had much faith, but if they did have they lost it; and if they did not have it, they never obtained it, but had other ideas instilled into their minds. You can see the results now in the families of those who in their eagerness for education were careless as to the medium through which

education should be obtained. Now the Catholics have large edifices in Salt Lake City; I suppose you have one here; and the Episcopalians and other denominations have established educational institutions in the midst of the people, and teachers have been sent by the different denominations for the purpose of indoctrinating the children of the Latter-day Saints with their views. But through the organization of the Sunday schools a great field was occupied that was very tempting to people of this character, and through this organization they were discouraged from attempting to organize Sunday schools. I believe there have been some attempts made, but they have not resulted in anything that has been very noticeable, and the field is now well occupied by our own people; and our schools are improving, and they are gathering in, as they should do, all the children. In many places there are young people appointed to go and labor with children who do not attend the schools, to induce them to come to school, and I think myself that this is an excellent thing to do. We have many very rude boys in some of our settlements, and perhaps rude girls. If all these could be induced to go to Sunday school, it would have a tendency to soften their manners and teach them proper deportment and good behavior. I think it is an important duty devolving upon Sunday school teachers to teach their children good manners and to give them the training which they may not in every instance receive at home. Our children need instruction of this kind; for in many places there is a great deal of neglect upon this point and children are allowed to grow up in a manner that is not very creditable to their parents, nor to the community. I am very thankful that there are so many children in the Sunday schools, and I am thankful also that the Sunday schools are becoming so efficient. Of course, as the Sunday schools grow, so will the Mutual Improvement Associations grow; and I think there is likely to be a more thorough and efficient organization of the Mutual Improvement Associations from this time forward than there has been, because some of our leading brethren are taking great interest in these associations, and they feel the necessity of adopting methods that shall be more thorough than those that have heretofore been in vogue.

My brethren and sisters, I think it is of the utmost importance that we should pay attention to this question of the proper training of children. I feel deeply impressed myself with its importance. I hear, as no doubt you all do, of families who have been a long time in the Church, and you ask about their children, and in some instances it is

really painful to learn that the children are not growing up in the faith of the Gospel; that the young men and the young women, especially the young women, marry out of the Church, and that the young men grow up without faith in the Gospel. I do not know anything scarcely that I hear that gives me greater pain than to hear this; because the parents of this Church have made great sacrifices, in many instances, for the truth. They love the truth, and they have shown their love for the truth by that which they have done; and to think that their children should grow up without faith in the Gospel, and careless and indifferent concerning it, is quite saddening. And much of this is due to us as parents. It is true that Satan is in the world, and his power is felt by all; and even with the best of care we have no guarantee that all our children will be faithful to the truth and grow up free from wrongdoing. There is no guarantee of this kind. But we are assured, from experience and by the word of the Lord, that parents who take proper pains with their children will have their reward in the improved condition of the children and in their preservation from sin.

I feel that this is something that should address itself to all of us; it should come home to every parent. There has been a disposition in the Church, I have sometimes thought so, at least—to have a large family. Men were proud of the number of children that they had; but some seemed to be careless as to the quality of their children. They went in for quantity more than they did for quality. I have often remarked that one Isaac was better than a great crowd of sons who were untrue to the Lord and who did not live so as to receive His blessings. Isaac is the progenitor of a wonderful race of people, and through his faithfulness blessings are felt by us who are here today. They have come down to us from him, and from his father, and from his son Jacob from whom sprang the twelve tribes of Israel. It is better to have a worthy faithful son, well cared for, well brought up, well trained, than to have any number that grow up without proper knowledge and without proper care. I feel that this is important for the women of this Church. It is a trite saying, and it is proved by all history, that the women have the forming of the characters of the children to a very great extent. It is often said that there is scarcely a great man to be found who did not have a great mother—that is, a mother of good qualities and who took care in rearing her children. I have noticed in my experience that where girls are indifferent about whom they marry, and with whom they associate, it is very frequently traceable to the