

Writings of Jesse Wentworth Crosby From the Juvenile Instructor

1. Thoughts Upon the Training of Children¹

The father of the great American republic declared to the world that “All just government comes from the consent of the governed.” God’s government is patriarchal; hence, He commanded, “Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land.” Those who obey God must also obey their parents in righteousness.

Pagan Rome transmitted to Christian England the law making children free from their parents at the age of twenty-one years, and the United States borrowed this from England. But nothing of this is found in God’s law. According to the latter, the child is subject to his parents at the age of fifty the same as at the age of five years. Yet I will admit there is much apparent justice in the modern custom, as during the first seven years of a person’s life he cannot be expected to do much towards sustaining himself; the next seven years he is supposed to be self-sustaining; and the third seven he is supposed to pay up for the support he received during the first seven; so that at twenty-one the son is on an even footing with his father. If children were industrious and obedient this would be the fact, and the son could say, “Father, I owe you good will only. I labored for you faithfully, and I never disobeyed you.” The good father could and would say, “True, my son, we owe each other only good will;” and, if able, the father might impart of his

¹ Juvenile Instructor 14(15 September 1879):210.

substance through good will; but if not able the obedient son would say, “Father, I thank you for good counsel; I am able and willing to work for this world’s goods.”

In nine cases out of ten the son who could have this courage would feel the better afterwards, and would be more prosperous for having done so. Property given to children is generally a curse, and not a blessing. parents are greatly mistaken who think it their duty to wear themselves out and wrong their neighbors to lay up riches for their children. such children are seldom good for much; and when they depart this life they go vastly indebted for bread and everything else that they used here.

One of God’s special commands is. “Thou shalt earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow;” and all who fail to do this are transgressors.

Here this, ye Latter-day Saints, and do not shield yourselves or your children from honest labor. In the language of the immortal Washington, we will say: “Agriculture is the most honorable, healthful and useful occupation for man.” It is an industry of God’s own appointment, and no good man should feel himself above it. The emperor of china, whose subjects know nearly as much as all the rest of the world, is required by law to plow and sow and do all manner of farm work with his own hands, at least one day in the year, as an example to his subjects.

But the Latter-day Saints have many duties; and, in the language of Franklin, we would say there are eight hours in each day for labor, eight hours for the improvement of the mind, and eight hours for sleep, rest and refreshments.

The children of the Latter-day Saints, above all others, should be examples and a light to the world; and parents should, through keeping the Word of Wisdom and observing the laws of health and life, bequeath to their offspring healthy and vigorous constitutions, that they may not fall victims to diphtheria and other dreadful plagues that are to waste away the inhabitants of the earth in the last days.

I often wish I could impress upon the minds of the Saints the importance of the Word of Wisdom, and the terrible tax they impose upon themselves in violating it. All other taxes are trifling compared to it. Hundreds of thousands, yet, well on towards a million of dollars, do the Saints in Utah pay out annually, and that is cash, for articles with which to violate the Word of Wisdom, which the Lord gave us nearly forty years ago, for the temporal salvation of all that can be called Saints.

Think of it, ye Saints, and see where you are drifting. it is not a matter of dollars alone. The Lord has said that those who observe the Word of Wisdom shall have health and strength, and great treasures of wisdom; and that they shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.

2. Letters to the Girls²

St. George,
August 4th, 1880.

TO THE GIRLS,

Sister King's³ correspondence with the boys of Utah suggests to me that a turn about is fair play,; so I write a letter to the girls of Utah.

You are the daughters of Zion, of whom ancient prophets and poets have written.

A palace is supposed to be most excellent and beautiful, and your accomplishments are to make you like one. "Polished after the similarity of a palace," is the language of sacred writ.

² Juvenile Instructor 15:184.

³ Hannah T. King of Salt Lake City had begun writing a series of letters to the boys of Utah in which she would answer their questions and share little thoughts of wisdom.

Now, how many of you will try to attain to this, by laying aside the fashions of Babylon; by leaving off the reading of novels and other worthless literature, and reading good books instead; and by adorning your persons with the work of your own hands?

Remember, the polishing referred to does not consist of dress, but the embellishments of the mind. Intelligence, virtue, kindness and modesty will make you lovely and beautiful. No festival, no gathering, no household is complete without these graces. the human form divine does not need gewgaws⁴ or pinback dresses to make it delightful to the eyes of sensible men.

Men in great numbers, both east and west of us, offer as an apology for not marrying, that the girls are too costly.

“We have not the means to support a wife,” is a common saying with them.

Let not this be said of our fair daughters. No, girls, you are and should be helps to mother, helps to father, and, when of suitable age to marry, helpmeets to your husbands.

Remember, “There is no excellence without labor.” Learn trades, as well as all manner of household duties; and this is not all. Literary attainments are wanted.

Come, how many of you will write to me, and so commence to improve in spreading your thoughts on paper, in shape for the press?

The press is an all-powerful engine in spreading the truth, and in getting the world turned right side up.

Tell me and the world, through the JUVENILE INSTRUCTOR, how much faith you have in the mission of Joseph Smith as a prophet and seer, to open up the dispensation of the fullness of times. And if you believe Joseph Smith was and is a

⁴ A gewgaw is a showy trinket or bauble.

true prophet, and that the doctrines of the Latter-day Saints are true, tell us why you believe it.

Come, girls, if you have an abiding testimony within you that the Latter-day Saints have the true faith, speak it out; and don't be ashamed to sign your true names to your letters.

Your friend and brother,

J. W. Crosby.

3. Letter to the Little Girls⁵

ST. GEORGE

May 17, 1881.

DEAR GIRLS:—The policy adopted by the INSTRUCTOR, of abridging the juvenile correspondence, I think quite correct, and trust that the youth of both sexes will be equally well pleased.

I wrote to the girls of Utah because they seemed to be neglected, while the boys were favorably noticed. I, too, seemed left out in the cold; but all at once, after so long a time, three letters came, one sent by ARRETTA YOUNG, of Leo, Piute Co., another from EVA YOUNG, of the same place, a third from MARY LOUISA ELLETT, of Fremont Valley, Pine Co., all of Utah.

These young sisters agree in saying that it is not through want of appreciation that they neglected so long to answer, but through timidity.

This I fully comprehend, girls, and do not blame you, but am more than pleased with your good and kind expressions of love towards God for correct

⁵ Juvenile Instructor 16:131.

principles of the gospel and the latter-day work, as introduced through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith, the great restorer.

You also say that you have not followed the fashions of old Babylon, and that in the future you will adorn your persons with the work of your own hands. I have no doubt thousands of others will endorse your sentiments.

Do not ask for costly apparel, for the Lord delights in plainness; but rather ask what you can do to lighten the burdens of your parents. Visit the sick, relieve the wants of the needy, and, by acts of goodness, gather around you laurels of fame that will make you beloved of all.

You ask me to point out errors in your writing. I would gladly do so that you might improve, but I see no errors; the writing is legible, the letters uniform, the spelling correct, and altogether quite a credit to you.

Arretta Young put “Miss” before her name. This is better left out. Persons of distinction and good taste leave off all titles when writing. The Queen of England signs her name simply “Victoria.” If the Saints would leave off the title of President, etc., I should like it.

Joseph Smith only asked to be called “brother;” and Jesus condemned the giving of titles of honor, and said “One is your master, even Christ; ye are all brethren.”

Do not complain that your lot is cast in a new country, for your temptations are far less than if you were being raised in large cities, where wealth abounds, with all its corrupting influences.

Be assured, dear girls, that the only path to true honor and glory here and hereafter is that of humility. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,” said He that spake as never man spake.

If you have not the chance of schooling, make it up by improving your leisure hours. Ask for good books; they are excellent teachers. Not a boy or girl in

Utah need be ignorant. The time spent by many youth in idle gossip, in card playing, in continual and excessive dancing, if applied for five years to earnest study, will fit anyone for a useful career in life. Practice makes perfect, and there is not excellence without labor.

I only wish all the youths could write like these three sisters.

Girls, your letters are not left out of the INSTRUCTOR for want of excellence, but for want of room. Write more, and ask others to write, and if there is no other more competent, I will answer, and be pleased to keep up this correspondence. All three of these correspondents assign good reasons for believing in the religion of the Latter-day Saints.

Dear children, I will give you one of my reasons why I believe, in common with you. I have tasted the fruit, and the tree that bears it must be good.

Every person that lives the religion of the Saints must be honest in his dealings; he must be industrious, for no idler is justified; he must be strictly virtuous, keeping the Ten Commandments given to Moses, in all things. What better religion can anybody want?

I have the assurance within me that the doctrines and principles believed in by this people only need to be known to be admired by the virtuous and the good of all nations.

Your friend and fellow-laborer for Zion,

J. W. Crosby

4. A Testimony⁶

The testimony of Elder Benjamin Brown, as published in the “Gems for the Young Folks,” is true, according to my best knowledge.

I traveled with him for years in the ministry, and know he was a man of faith and integrity; and will further state that in my ten years experience in traveling as a missionary, I have seen the testimony of the Elders confirmed, in many instances, with signs following. And what is quite remarkable, many people have seen the Elders in dreams and visions, and recognized them on sight. Others have heard beautiful music in their rooms at night, just before the Elders came to their neighborhood to preach.

A little before the Elders came to my home in New York State, in a vision of the night I saw my body and spirit separated, and they were in features, form and size, exactly alike. I was calm and composed, and the recollection is with me to-day, just as vividly as forty-two years ago.

When I came out of my vision, fear seized me, and my heart beat quickly. In a short time, however, a happy train of thought came to my mind, and I saw that the vision was given to show me that the immortal spirit is exactly like the tenement it lives in. This gave me joy, and while in this happy mood, word came that the Latter-day Saints were going to preach at my old familiar school-house.

This was the first time I had heard of Saints in our day, and the very name brought conviction to my mind; for I remembered that the people of God in ancient times were called Saints, but not Catholics, Protestants, Methodists or Baptists.

⁶ Juvenile Instructor 16:154.

Faith sprang up in my heart that these Saints were the people who possessed the truth, and could teach it to me; and at that one meeting I leaned more of the Bible, and more of God and His ways, than I had learned in all my life before.

The Empire State, with its hundreds of religious creeds, lost their charms for me; and I was, and still am, thoroughly convinced that these Elders came in answer to my earnest prayers that God would send messengers to teach me the true religion, which I had failed to learn of modern Christians.

The solution of the “Mormon” question is simply this: Every good Latter-day Saint has an evidence in his or her heart, that the work is God’s own doings, and that He is able to carry it on; and will, through the instrumentality of the Latter-day Saints, establish the beautiful Zion that prophets and kings have desired to see, even that Zion which shall become the praise of the whole earth.