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## DISCOURSE:

*Delivered at the General Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt City, Sunday, October 7th, 1894, by*

**PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON**

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

In standing up this morning to address you, my brethren and sisters, I humbly crave an interest in your faith and prayers; for if I say anything that will be instructive, it will have to be through the aid of the Spirit of God. It is seldom that I have felt as weak as I now do in standing in the presence of this vast assembly.

The conference thus far has been one of great interest to me. I have enjoyed the remarks of the brethren very much, and I feel that the Spirit of the Lord has been with His servants in addressing us, and much valuable instruction has been given that if remembered and acted upon will cause us to be a better people. I think there is no people that ever lived—at least, I do not find an account of any—that has had such a wealth of instruction and counsel as the Latter-day Saints have had since the organization of the Church in these days. It is true that there have been dispensations in which the people have been further advanced than we are, because the Lord and His servants had worked among them for a greater period of time than they have among us, as, for instance, in the days of Enoch; but for the length of time that the Church has been established there has been an outpouring of instruction and counsel that, I think, is without a parallel in the history of mankind. If we are not a great people, through goodness and fidelity to the principles of the Gospel, it is because we have neglected the opportunities that the Lord has given unto us, and the counsels and revelations that have been so freely imparted to us. I do trust that the words that have been spoken at this conference have not been spoken in vain; that they have not fallen on barren soil; that they have not reached unwilling hearts; but that the spirit which has prompted them will rest upon us and inspire us to carry them out in our lives.

I am deeply impressed myself with the importance of the Latter-day Saints living so close to the Lord that they will feel for themselves the importance of the principles which are taught to them. We live in a peculiar time. There are a great many agencies at work among the children of men; a great many false and delusive spirits; and a great deal of unbelief concerning God and His power and interposition in the affairs of the

children of men. There may have been times in the history of mankind when an equal amount of skepticism upon these points prevailed; but I doubt very much whether there ever was a generation that was so completely hardened in their hearts in regard to God and His providences as this generation in which we live. You can scarcely find a people now who have any faith that God interposes in the affairs of the children of men. Those who call themselves the most enlightened proclaim that the universe is governed by fixed and immutable laws; that effect follows cause, and that God does not suspend these laws, nor interpose in any manner to prevent their operation. Therefore, they say, it is useless to ask Him, in the name of Jesus, to interpose in behalf of mankind; men must endure the consequences of their own acts, and there is no way of avoiding the operation of these laws. There is, no doubt, an element of truth in these theories; still, they mislead and have a wrong effect upon the mind. For God does ask us to have faith in Him, to believe in Him, and to appeal to Him; and He gives us the promise that if we do so in faith He will interpose in our behalf, and He will bless us in ways that are unknown to men and by means which are invisible to mortal sight. He gives us this encouragement in the Gospel, and He calls upon us to exercise faith in Him and in His word; and we have proved His words to be true upon these points. But it is a difficult thing in the midst of this widespread unbelief, and these false doctrines and theories which come to us and to our children in the guise of science, to prevent the spirit of unbelief from influencing us. This also is one of the great obstacles in the way of the education of our children. The books which are in our schools, and from which our children are taught, contain theories that are unsound; they are based upon false premises, and that lead to wrong conclusions; and it requires the utmost care on the part of parents and teachers to prevent bad effects following education based upon such text books. Hence it is that when our young men go east to obtain education they are exposed to dangers that are more terrible, according to my view, than a contagious disease. I would rather my sons and daughters should run the risk of some infectious disease than be exposed to the influences that prevail in some of the schools of the land and in the text books that are used therein—that is, without some influence to counteract their effect and to show wherein they are fallacious and unsound.

We have all these things to contend with. The rising generation have to be watched over with a care that in former

times was not necessary. There is danger in education of this kind. Yet there is an ardent desire on our part that our children should be educated, and upon their part to receive education, because it is the spirit of the age. Our young people are full of desire to obtain knowledge and to qualify themselves for the duties and labors that are likely to devolve upon them. But while giving them education there is danger of their losing their faith in the eternal truths of heaven. Although we have taken pains to organize our young men who go east to school, and to have them hold regular meetings, partake of the sacrament and bear testimony, yet the information comes to us that there is an inclination in the minds of some of our young men to adopt the false theories that are taught and to yield to the spirit of unbelief that is prevalent in these institutions of learning.

We have also another influence that is seeking to obtain power in the midst of the people of God. There was a time when revelation from God was universally denied. The religious world announced that the day of miracles had passed; that God had given all His revelations, and they were embodied in the Bible, and that it was in vain to look for further revelation from Him. This belief was universally taught. Even the Catholic Church, that considers itself the successor of the churches organized by the Apostles, while claiming great power for its priesthood, did not believe in revelation from God. Of course, those who did not believe in God denied it as a natural consequence of their unbelief. But what a change has taken place! In the days when the Saints were driven from Jackson County, Missouri, one of the chief charges brought against the Latter-day Saints was that they believed in miracles, that they believed in a prophet, and that that prophet received revelations from God. But who is there now that does not believe that there are means of obtaining communication with the spirit world? That belief has become almost as universal as the former unbelief was. The spiritualists, as they are called, have risen up, as well as other organizations, entertaining this belief, until now no one scarcely will assert that communication with the spirit world is not attainable. The probability of it, at least, will be admitted. Right in this Territory we have pretenders arising, claiming that they have the authority of the Priesthood, or that they have the power to work miracles, and even going so far, in some instances, as to reproach the Latter-day Saints for a lack of power to work miracles, asserting that they possess it to a greater extent than we do. All