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*Delivered at the General Conference
of the Church, in the Tabernacle,
Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon,
October 6th, 1895, by*

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

In looking over this vast congregation and seeing this collection of intelligent human beings, one is filled with a sense of unworthiness and a want of capability to say anything that will be of interest to so many souls, unless, indeed, God is with him. It seems to me that when a man stands before a congregation like this he must feel an almost overpowering sense of his nothingness; and it is with this feeling that I arise this afternoon. I pray you and I pray God that I may be able to say the things that ought to be said and that are adapted to the circumstances and conditions of the people. Many of you have come hundreds of miles to attend this conference. It is not a light thing for men to stand up to attempt to satisfy the expectations and the desires of people who have shown such earnestness and such zeal as to travel so far as many have done to be present here today.

God has been with His servants in speaking to you today. I was particularly impressed in listening to President Woodruff, able to speak as he did for some fifty-two minutes, at his advanced time of life; and I felt that God certainly had shown to us His ability to sustain His servants, His willingness to do so, and His power to give His people the bread of life through those whom He chooses. The practical character of the remarks also of President Smith, I thought exceedingly well timed, because we need instruction in our practical, everyday duties, as much in their place as we do to have spiritual instruction. He touched upon points that I think of great importance to us—points that should be dwelt upon in our conferences, and that should be remembered and carried away with us to our homes, because after all it is the practical living of our religion that witnesses to the Lord and to the heavens and the earth and its inhabitants that we are indeed that which we profess to be, and it is these practical lessons that we receive and that we in turn give to others that make an impression upon the human family.

I have through my life endeavored to look forward to the fulfillment of the promises of God concerning us in the influence that we as a people would have upon mankind; but notwithstanding this has been a subject very familiar to me in my thoughts, I have been, I

might say, almost surprised of late at the manner in which the promises of God are being fulfilled concerning us. It is coming about in ways so real and so clearly in fulfillment of that which has been told to us that though familiar with the prophecies concerning it, I have felt greatly surprised at times. It is plain to me—plainer to me than ever before in my life—that God is using this people to accomplish a great work in the earth, and He is giving His people an influence among men and in this nation that is having its effect, and that will bring forth great fruits in the not distant future. I can see as never before how important it is that we as a people shall carry out, faithfully, humbly and obediently, the counsels and instructions that we receive from the servants of God. We are like a city set upon a hill, and the eyes of the nation and the peoples of the earth are directed toward us, and that which we say and do is having great weight—more weight than we have supposed.

Therefore, in coming together as we do at these general conferences, it is of the utmost importance that the teachings we receive should be from the Lord and be adapted to the circumstances and conditions which surround us and that which we have to do. We have received very much valuable instruction since we have been together, and if we can only retain the spirit of it in our hearts and carry it away with us, and not forget it, it will be of invaluable benefit to us. God has chosen us out from the nations to accomplish a great work, and He is adding to the influence of the Latter-day Saints. It is remarkable how we are commended; how the policy that has governed in the founding of Utah and the building up of the settlements of Utah, the caring for the poor, etc. is being received now with great favor, and how universal is the commendation of the policy that has been pursued in this territory. There was a time when one of the chief charges against us was that the Priesthood, as it was termed, had too much influence with the people, and that this influence was wielded in a manner that was distasteful to public sentiment. Now an extraordinary change has taken place in this respect. The manner in which this city was founded, the manner in which our settlements have been arranged, the manner in which our land has been divided, the manner in which we have apportioned the streams of water for the irrigation of the land, the manner in which the poor have been cared for, the manner in which they are now instructed and have been instructed—all this receives unstinted commendation and praise from many persons, and they say that Utah sets an example. Population is increas-

ing; homes for the millions that are congested in the great cities are needed; men see that the cities are overcrowded, and that vice and crime and everything of a horrible nature is increasing in the midst of these congested populations, and they turn around and ask, what is the remedy? What shall we do with the people? The public lands are all being absorbed in those regions. You have read no doubt of the opening of Oklahoma and the manner in which thousands and thousands of people crowded in there; how they camped on the road while waiting for the signal to go in and take possession of the lands that were ready for occupancy. This gives an idea of the disposition there is to obtain land; and reflecting men look around and ask, what shall we do with this increasing population? Where shall we find room for them? Now, there is a vast area of land that has heretofore been considered worthless. It has been looked upon as unfit for human habitation. It is what is called the arid regions, of which Utah may be said to be the center. It was thought that this was good enough for Mormons, and some who have found fault with us religiously, and who have said that we were misled, have described our land as a cursed land, a land of salt, a land of dryness, a land of barrenness, a land that should be shunned by men instead of sought for as a home. They would use this as an argument to show that the authority of the Priesthood was not here or we would not have been led to such a place. This until quite recently has been the very general opinion; but we have had visitors come here by the thousands, and they have discovered that Utah is an exceedingly fertile region, and they have seen the results of the labor and the application of the Latter-day Saints, and their admiration has been excited by the sight. Hence a change has gradually taken place in public opinion upon these points. And now the time has come when there must be something done to relieve the crowded population of the large cities; attention is turned to what is called the arid regions, and steps are being taken to provide ways and means for the settling of these regions, and thinking men look around to see the best plan that can be adopted for the settling of the people upon these lands. This brings before them the condition of Utah Territory. They see what has been done here by the Mormon people, to begin with, and by others who have come in, and they say, "This is the example. Here is a practical illustration of the manner in which people who have very little means can make their living from the soil in the arid regions." Everything that President Young did in the beginning, and every-