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## THE PROPHET OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

*Discourse delivered in the Tabernacle,  
Salt Lake City, Sunday,  
December 23, 1894, by*

**PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON**

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I have been reminded since I entered this stand of a fact which I was cognizant of, but which for the time was not in my mind, that today is the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Eighty-nine years ago this day he was born. Of course, the day cannot pass without arousing profound reflections and vivid emotions in the hearts of the Latter-day Saints in contemplating the great work which God our Eternal Father has wrought through his agency. When we reflect upon the work which has been accomplished through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and praise to God that we have been permitted to live in the earth at a time when we can enjoy the fruits of the labors that he performed. It has been said that probably no man, excepting the Son of God himself, ever accomplished so great a work in so short a time. Of course, a complete history is not before us of all that men of God have done in various dispensations. We know but little concerning Enoch, or Noah; and especially is our knowledge very limited concerning those who lived upon this continent. After the death of our Savior and His visit to the people of this land a reign of righteousness was ushered in, and no doubt very many mighty men lived during that period. But we think it is not too much to say that no man, always excepting our Redeemer, was ever chosen to lay the foundation of a greater work than that which has been accomplished in our time. All the prophets who have looked forward to the latter days have contemplated the founding of a great and mighty work. It has been termed the dispensation of the fulness of times. It has been predicted that it should be the crowning dispensation of all the dispensations of God to man. And certainly when we look at the work which has been accomplished, at the wonderful progress that has been made, and the marvelous changes which have been wrought out in the short period of sixty-four years, we are justified in anticipating the greatest and most magnificent results. There have been promises made concerning this work that it should not be given into the

hands of another people, but that it should stand forever. To no previous dispensation and to none engaged therein was such a promise as this given. But according to the records which have come down to us, every righteous man unto whom was vouchsafed visions and knowledge concerning the future was informed that the work in which he was engaged was not that great work which should be victorious and triumphant in the earth and never be overthrown. Holy men of old foresaw, through the revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ, that great changes should occur, and that the work with which they were associated should not be perpetuated so as to become universal. But unto us who have been so signally favored as to live in this dispensation the sure promise of God, confirmed by covenant to us, is that this work shall not be overthrown; that the assaults of the adversary, the devices and machinations of the wicked, and their organized efforts to accomplish the ruin of the Church of God will not be successful, but will utterly fail.

The comfort that this promise has given cannot be described by human language. In the midst of the most fierce and terrible persecutions; at times when everything seemed so dark that the darkness could not be penetrated; when there seemed to be no ray of light illumining the path or pointing the way of deliverance to the people, this promise has filled them with hope, has given them strength, has infused unconquerable courage in their hearts; and they have rejoiced even in those dark hours because of the work which the Lord has spoken concerning the future triumph of this work. Even when Joseph was slain—probably as dark an hour as the Church ever saw—and when men cast about not knowing where to look and whom to follow, there was in the hearts of the people of God an unshaken faith that the Lord would not leave His people and suffer the work that He had established to be overthrown. Up to the time of the Prophet's martyrdom the anticipation of the Latter-day Saints was that he would live to lead the people of God until Jesus should come. I suppose that there was not a feeling in the Church, not a thought among the faithful Saints, that the Prophet would not live, not only to be the means in the hands of God of laying the foundation of the work, but, if I may so speak, of laying its capstone and completing the work, and witnessing the redemption of Zion as the leader, the revelator and the prophet of God. Those of you, therefore, who are not familiar with those times can well imagine what a shock it was to the people to find that the enemy

had obtained power to take his life, and how it naturally tried their faith, and would have caused them to have despaired had it not been for this promise to which I have alluded, and which was given to the Prophet in the beginning, namely, that the work that he was the instrument in the hands of God of founding should never be overthrown. And from that day to this, through all the vicissitudes and changes which have occurred, that promise has shone out brightly and filled the hearts of the Saints with hope, and they have never yielded to despair.

That which has been wrought out by the Lord through this man of God is exceedingly difficult to comprehend. The work that he accomplished is so magnificent, so far-reaching, so grand in every respect, that it is not easy for the human mind in a brief space of time to grasp the great results that have been achieved. When God revealed Himself to Joseph the world was in utter ignorance concerning the personality of Deity. Their had been a very decided departure from the knowledge which had been once enjoyed by mankind concerning God, so much so that a great number of thinking people rejected entirely the idea of there being a Supreme Being. They did this because of the conflicting teachings of men who professed to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was something so irrational, so unreasonable and so difficult for people to understand connected with the character of God, as represented by those who professed to be His ministers, that thousands of men in Christendom declared that there could not be a God, because their minds and reason revolted at the acceptance of such a Being such as was described by those who professed to worship Him. There were thousands of honest people who were groping for light, seeking for knowledge and asking questions concerning the teachings of the Savior and the promises that were made by Him while He was upon the earth. But their search was in vain. The personality of God was utterly denied. No one could give a satisfactory explanation concerning it. The nature of the Trinity was not understood. The relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost to each other, and everything connected with them, was declared to be so mysterious that it was considered sinful to make inquiries concerning it. It was forbidden ground, upon which men, women and children should not attempt to tread. They should not ask questions concerning these things, because there seemed to be an idea that it was profanity to attempt to obtain information about them. In this way religious teachers silenced questions