

on that historic day with the words of this remarkable and final challenge issued by the prophet Moroni as he completed his record fifteen centuries ago. Said he:

“And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?”

“And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true” (Moro. 10:27, 29).

My brothers and sisters, without reservation I promise you that if each of you will observe this simple program, regardless of how many times you previously may have read the Book of Mormon, there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to his commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God, which promise I solemnly make in his holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Following Elder Hinckley’s remarks, the choir sang “An Angel from on High” without announcement.

Elder W. Grant Bangerter

President Kimball has already suggested that what we say may be supportive of the things he has already declared. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us. He was followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing “An Angel from on High.”

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “High on the Mountain Top,” following which Elder W. Grant Bangerter, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn “High on the Mountain Top.”

President Tanner

We welcome those who have just joined us on radio or television and announce that we are gathered in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the first session of the 149th Semiannual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elder W. Grant Bangerter, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1-2).

Heed teachings of the prophets

One of the principal purposes of this general conference of the Church is to announce again that God has

raised up a prophet by whom he declares his will to the peoples of this world. This means that not only is the prophet sent to those who accept his words, such as the members of the Church, but also he is speaking in the name of God to all the inhabitants of the earth. He says, as did an ancient prophet, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken" (Isa. 1:2). He has been sent especially to you who do not believe in God or in prophets. Wouldn't you like to know what he is saying? He says that in these last days God has restored the ancient gospel in its fulness and wishes to make a new covenant with all people. He says that Jesus Christ will shortly come again to the earth to save and judge the world and that we should all get ready. Now whether you believe it or not, this is earth-shaking news.

The interesting thing about prophets is that most people don't listen to them. That is why prophets often seem to be impatient or even angry. This is how the Lord feels about us when we don't listen. That is how you feel when your children won't listen.

Existence of God

We know some of you say that you do not believe in God. Some of you have even been so unwise as to say there is no God. That kind of statement raises some interesting questions. Do you think your unbelief makes any difference? He won't go away just because you don't believe in him. Reportedly, when Galileo was forced to say, contrary to his knowledge, that the earth did not turn, he then added, "And yet it turns" (see *Cassell's Book of Quotations, Proverbs, and Household Words*, ed. W. Gurney Benham, London: Cassell and Co., 1914, p. 737). Perhaps you are correct in saying that God is not like

you have been told, but how can you know that there is no God? Did he reveal it to you? Have you been there to make sure? All you can really know is that you don't know there is a God, and that is an admission of ignorance.

Two Russians went around the world in a spacecraft a time or two and declared that they had gone to heaven and God was not there. This is a pretty weak argument for atheism. It isn't even scientific. It reminds me of the blasphemous remark of a scoffing acquaintance of my brother who said, "I dreamed I saw God and he was a horse." My brother's comment was, "Certainly. That is perfectly logical to a jackass."

All the evidence is on our side. You cannot prove God away from us. To know that there is no God you would have to go everywhere and know everything.

The prophet declares that God lives and that he is speaking to us in these last days. As witnesses we know this. God has been seen, heard, and felt. With the declaration that the gospel has been restored is the promise that the Holy Ghost will also witness the fact to you, and then you will know. If that doesn't happen after you have earnestly and prayerfully listened, you are free from all obligation to believe.

Unbelievers

What about you who believe in God but don't believe in prophets or revelation? Why not? How can you know about God without revelation? Is it bad to have a prophet? Is there some rule against it? Don't we need a prophet? Wouldn't it be comforting, for example, if the president of the United States were a prophet? Wouldn't it be wonderful for this country if God would just tell us what we ought to be doing? As a matter of fact, he is telling us. The

only trouble is that by and large we won't listen. It is just the same as in ancient times when other prophets spoke. You would rather commit adultery, play on Sunday, drink your whiskey, and let someone else tend to the problems of society and the world. God is trying to straighten all these things out by the words of his prophet. And only when you have enough faith will you be able to hear the message.

Warning to members

Now, to the most foolish of all, those of you who belong to the Church and who say you are not interested. You say that you are not religious and you don't enjoy going to church. Some people who are sick physically don't like their medicine either, but they take it so they may be well. Do you remember when your parents urged you to eat your vegetables? Now you are doing the same with your children. Let me tell you about your spiritual vegetables. You have been brought up in light. You know about God. You know about the Savior. You know they appeared to Joseph Smith. You know the angel Moroni gave the Book of Mormon to Joseph Smith. You have it in your home. You believe in the Bible. That is a great deal to throw away just so you can go fishing.

I have a friend who one time went on a family outing to Yellowstone Park. While he was faithful to his commitments as a member and leader in the Church, some of his relatives tended to scoff at his "straitlaced" religious nature. They persuaded him, one Sunday morning, to go out in the boat fishing with them. Suddenly a strong wind arose, and they found themselves in such danger that they feared for their lives. The taunting and skepticism were suddenly gone. In plaintive unison they looked to my friend, saying, "Please, can't you pray for

us?" They evidently had little confidence in their own petitions or perhaps sensed their unworthiness to call for divine aid. The irony of the situation is that my friend, having been tempted against his better judgment to do something of which he felt the Lord would not approve, says of his predicament: "I had no prayer to offer. All I could think of was the headline in the newspaper saying, 'Stake President Drowns While Fishing on Sunday.'"

God went to quite a bit of trouble so that you could have the gospel, and now the prophet is telling you that you had better pay attention because these things are for your happiness and that the "rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow" (D&C 1:3).

The real test

We find joy in the Church in singing with fervor the great hymn "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" (*Hymns*, no. 196). I have something to say now to those who call themselves faithful and devoted to the gospel. While we are being thankful for a prophet, are we sure we have really listened to what he said? I know we go home from each conference feeling inspired and touched by the messages he has given and by the sermons of all the General Authorities. The real test, however, is what we do after we get home.

President Kimball spoke four years ago at the closing session of a general conference stating how impressed he was by the messages and instructions given in the various sermons, that he had made a listing of all the things he needed to remember, and that as soon as he returned home he intended to perfect himself according to all that had been said (see *ENSIGN*, Nov. 1975, p. 111). Why shouldn't we all do that? Do you have your garden? Are you

providing for the present and future needs of your family? Are you getting out of debt? What is your relationship with the Savior? Do you pray? Do you read the scriptures? Do you pay your tithing? Do you fight with your neighbors? or your wife? or your children?

We can ask some special questions of leaders of the Church. It would be a disgrace to criticize you, knowing of your devotion and sacrifice, but let me ask you, Are you really listening to what the prophet says? We know that some of you do more than others. It is five years now since he said that every boy should go on a mission (see *ENSIGN*, May 1974, p. 87). Why are half of them still at home? Quorum presidents and home teachers, Why are there still so many diseased and sick in spirit? Why have you not "bound up that which was broken, neither . . . brought again that which was driven away, neither . . . sought that which was lost" (Ezek. 34:4)? The Lord has called you through his prophet. Listen to what he says. How you listen to the prophet makes the difference between being a Laman or Lemuel or a Nephi. There are some Lamans in the priesthood of the Church.

Elder Mark E. Petersen

After one of his journeys in Palestine, Jesus came to his own city and taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

Those who heard him were astonished at his doctrine, but they were also offended. He had been their neighbor, and they resented his assuming to teach them. They said:

"Is not this the carpenter, the

President Kimball: the prophet

To all of you of whom I have made mention—unbelievers; non-members; members of the Church, both faithful and those not so devoted; and to the leaders; and all who bear the holy priesthood—I declare as one who knows and has authority, that Spencer W. Kimball, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is the prophet of God to all the inhabitants of the earth. He is the direct successor to Isaiah; Malachi; Peter, James, and John; and to Joseph Smith and others in between. He is the chief Apostle of Jesus Christ on the earth and is authorized to announce that the gospel has been restored to the earth in these, the last days, in preparation for the Second Coming and that these are the days to prepare. His is a voice of gladness in the glorious news he bears and a solemn warning to us all. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder W. Grant Bangerter, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:3).

Jesus was grieved at their rejection of him and "marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:6). It was then that he said, "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own