

Elder L. Tom Perry

Sister Grassli, on behalf of my grandchildren and hundreds of thousands of other great young people we have in the Church, whom you've led so faithfully with such inspiration, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Sustaining Church leaders

April 6, 1830, is a significant date for Latter-day Saints. It is the day The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. The translation and printing of the Book of Mormon had been completed, the priesthood had been restored, and now the Lord directed that His church should again be organized here on the earth.

Prospective members of the Church gathered at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, for this special occasion. The meeting was simple. Joseph Smith, then twenty-four years of age, called the group to order and designated five associates to join with him in satisfying New York's legal requirements for the incorporation of a religious society. After kneeling in solemn prayer, Joseph Smith proposed that he and Oliver Cowdery be called as teachers and spiritual advisers to the newly organized Church. Everyone raised his right arm to the square, and the pattern of sustaining Church leadership was established.

At that meeting the revelation contained in the twenty-first section of the Doctrine and Covenants was received. In that revelation the Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

"Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith" (D&C 21:1-2).

Today we have had the opportunity of raising our right arms to the square and sustaining Howard W. Hunter as our President. This is a historic occasion, as well as an opportunity to contemplate the blessing it is to have a prophet of God to lead us. I believe we should pause at the conclusion of this memorable session to remember what it means to sustain a President of the Church as a seer and a prophet.

The President is a seer

First, the title of seer. Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and many others were seers. They were seers because they were blessed with a clearer vision of divine glory and power than other mortals.

Perhaps the best description we have of a seer is in the Book of Mormon when Ammon finds the land of Lehi-Nephi. There was much rejoicing in the land at the arrival of Ammon. King Limhi addressed his people and called on Ammon to rehearse what had happened to their brethren since they had been separated. Then King Limhi sent his people to their homes and requested that the plates containing a record of his people from the time they had left Zarahemla be brought before Ammon that he might read them. As soon as Ammon had read the record, the king inquired of him if he could interpret languages from other records he had in his possession, and Ammon told him he could not. Then Ammon said:

"I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. . . .

"And the king said that a seer is greater than a prophet.

"And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God.

"But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known" (Mosiah 8:13, 15-17).

The President is a prophet

What does it mean to be a prophet? The word *prophet* in the Greek language means "inspired teacher" (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 3:1164). In Hebrew the word *prophet* means "one who announces or brings a message from God." According to Elder John A. Widtsoe:

"A prophet is a teacher. That is the essential meaning of the word. He teaches the body of truth, the gospel, revealed by the Lord to man; and under inspiration explains it to the understanding of the people. He is an expounder of truth. Moreover, he shows that the way to human happiness is through obedience to God's law. He calls to repentance those who wander away from the truth. He becomes a warrior for the consummation of the Lord's purposes with respect to the human family. The purpose of his life is to uphold the Lord's plan of salvation. All this he does by close communion with the Lord until he is 'full of power by the spirit of the Lord'" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, comp. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960], p. 257).

Father's experience with Joseph F. Smith

While my father attended LDS High School, he worked and lived in the home of President Joseph F. Smith. He wrote in his life history about President Smith:

"Most great men that I have known have been deflated by intimate contact. Not so with the prophet Joseph F. Smith. Each common everyday act added inches to his greatness. To me he was a prophet even while washing his hands or untying his shoes."

My father tells of one experience in which the prophet taught him a practical lesson late one night as he entered the Beehive House. Again quoting from my father's life history:

"I walked with guarded steps through the office, then into the private study to the door at the foot of the steps that led to my bedroom. But the door would not open. I pushed and I pushed to no avail. Finally I gave up and went back to a rug that I had noticed in the hall with the intention of sleeping there until morning.

"In the darkness I bumped against another partially opened door and the collision awakened the prophet. He turned on the light and, seeing who it was, came down the stairway and inquired concerning my difficulty.

"The door is locked that leads to my room," I explained. He went to the door and pulled instead of pushed, and the door opened. Had he been disturbed by my foolish blunder I would not have been surprised, for I had robbed him of a precious night's sleep by a thoughtless act. He only smiled and stopped to inquire of a strange stable boy what I had stumbled into. I pointed to the half open door at the other end of the hall.

"Let me show you something," He took time at midnight to explain, "When in the dark, never go groping with hands parted and outstretched; that permits doors to get by your guard and hit you. Keep your arms in front, but hands together; then you will feel with your

hands and not your head.' I thanked him and moved to my quarters. He waited until I reached the rear stairway and then he retired."

A prophet teaches and guides

Isn't a prophet someone who teaches us to open doors we could not open ourselves—doors to greater light and truth? Isn't a prophet like a pair of hands clasped together in front of the body of the Church, helping members navigate through the dark corridors of the world? Isn't a prophet someone who watches and waits for us patiently while we get to where we need to be?

Never has there been a time when the written and spoken word can descend upon us from so many different sources. Through the media we find analysts analyzing the analysts, almost overwhelming us with opinions and different views.

What a comfort it is to know that the Lord keeps a channel of communication open to His children through the prophet. What a blessing it is to know we have a voice we can trust to declare the will of the Lord. As the prophet Amos taught, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

A prophet keeps the doctrine pure

The Lord surely understood the need to keep His doctrines pure and to trust their interpretation to only one source. Of course, we are all admonished to study and gain as much knowledge as we can possibly obtain in this life. We are encouraged to discuss and exchange ideas one with another to further our understanding. However, the Lord has only one source for the declaration of His basic fundamental doctrines. Even as General Authorities of the Church, we are instructed, "In order

to preserve the uniformity of doctrinal and policy interpretation, you are asked to refer to the Office of the First Presidency for consideration [of] any doctrinal or policy questions which are not clearly defined in the scriptures or in the *General Handbook of Instructions*."

In this way, conflict and confusion and differing opinions are eliminated.

President Brigham Young has assured us we can have complete confidence in the prophets. He said:

"The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, for if they should try to do so the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth. Your leaders are trying to live their religion as far as [they are] capable of doing so" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:289).

The good spirit of President Hunter

Today, by sustaining a new prophet, we have placed ourselves under solemn covenant to heed his voice. The Lord has designated Howard W. Hunter as our prophet, seer, and revelator.

An illustration of the spirit of President Hunter occurred at the conclusion of a regional conference at BYU's Marriott Center as he was exiting the building through the west tunnel. This was the period when he was just beginning to stand again and use his walker, but he was still a little unsteady. My son Lee and three of his children had attended the conference, and they were also exiting the Marriott Center through the west tunnel. As Lee and his children moved up the tunnel, his son Justin, who was wandering more left and right than in a straight line, drew dangerously close to President Hunter. Lee cautioned Justin, "Don't get in President Hunter's way." President Hunter stopped

for only a moment, turned his head around, smiled, and with a twinkle in his eye said, "Nothing gets in my way."

Follow President Hunter, our prophet

How typical of President Hunter. His life's story is filled with accounts of determination, accomplishment, faith, and true Christian love. He is an inspiration to all of us. He is our prophet. We sit at his feet ready to feast on the wisdom of this true and faithful servant-leader. We stand ready to heed his voice because we know he speaks for the Lord.

May God bless us that we may follow him who has been called to be our prophet, seer, and revelator. I give witness that divine intervention has preserved and prepared President Hunter for this great and important responsibility. He is the Lord's servant. Of this I testify in the name of Him whose church this is, even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Perry, for that stirring message and testimony. Elder Perry is a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and has been our concluding speaker for this solemn assembly session of the conference.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of the conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "O My Father." The benediction will be given by Elder C. Max Caldwell of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The chorus sang "O My Father."

Elder C. Max Caldwell offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1994, at 2:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Primary children's choir from the Kaysville Utah Region, with Sister Vanja Y. Watkins conducting and Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Primary choir sang "Because God Loves Me" and "Thank Thee for Everything." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Howard W. Hunter, who this morning was sustained in the solemn assembly as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presides at this conference and has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome you to the second session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance and who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.